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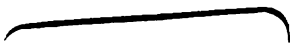
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F. 2.





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“The automobile's gaining on us”

*See page 84*

F.V.

# THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY

BY  
WILLIAM J. HOPKINS

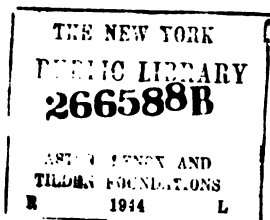
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**THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY**





## CHAPTER I.

Durston is an old town much like many other old towns scattered along the New England coast. At the foot of the slope upon which the town is built lies the tranquil harbor, and along the crest of the ridge runs the main street. In the old days this street was the king's road, and somehow or other they forgot to change that name when they fought against the king. So it is King street still, and a very quiet, beautiful street, shaded by great elms which arch across it. For although Durston went to sleep when steamships came into fashion, and has not yet waked, these old trees have industriously kept on growing until they can shake hands with each other, high up above the road.

Early on a June evening a boy ran along King street. He ran stealthily, looking sharply about him, and frequently hid close against the trunk of one of the old trees; which was no trouble, for they were great



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trunks, much bigger than the boy. It was not easy to see why he ran so stealthily, nor why he hid so often, for he was the only person in sight. And it was not easy to guess why he jumped the long white picket fence of the Romaine place instead of walking quietly and properly in at the entrance, for the gate stood wide open. But he seemed to prefer his own way, and with the same stealthy run, skulking behind the clumps of shrubs that skirted the lawn, he approached the house.

It was an old, square, white house, with a long box-bordered walk running from the front door straight down to the gate. These box borders had once divided the walk from the gardens on each side. But the old gardens, with their oval and heart-shaped beds, were gone long ago, and in their places were smooth, green lawns. Lilac bushes stood along the outer edges of the lawns, almost close enough to form a hedge, and quite close enough to shelter the boy who was sneaking toward the house.

Behind the last bush, from which he had a good view of the side door, the boy stopped and crouched close. Then he peered carefully about and, seeing nobody, whistled

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shrilly. Nothing happened, and he whistled again. This time a window opened over the side door and from this window another boy's head was poked cautiously out. Immediately the first boy leaned out of his hiding place and waved a thin hand.

"S-s-st!" he hissed. "Ted, come out."

The boy at the window heard the hoarse whisper, nodded silently and drew in his head. In a moment one leg emerged, then his body and the other leg, and he was on the roof of the little porch. He let himself over the edge, slid down one of the old Grecian columns and joined the first boy behind the lilac bush.

"Hello, Van," he said.

"Hello, Ted," said Van. "Just got back this afternoon, didn't you? I heard you were coming. Say, I asked your father and he said he really didn't know, but he thought you might be down to-day. What d'you think of that? But say, Ted, what you shut up in your room for?"

"Father sent me up there to study," Ted answered. "You know I flunked in three things, an' father says I've got to study every afternoon or every evening till I make 'em up. I can't ever make 'em up that way."

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If I couldn't do 'em at school with the class, when the masters were helping us, I guess I can't do 'em alone. I'm sick of school, Van."

"My!" exclaimed Van, with a deep sigh of longing.

"I've been off at school ever since I can remember," Ted went on, gloomily. "Went there when I was only seven. An' now father an' mother hate to have me 'round. They're just glad when they can get me off to school again. I wish 't you could go, Van."

"My!" said Van again, with another sigh. "I wish 't I could, Ted. But you know I'm delicate."

Van grinned as he spoke. He was a tall, lanky boy who had grown too fast. His hair was sandy red and his lean face was almost covered with freckles. But his thin, freckled hands looked as tough as wire.

Ted grinned in sympathy. He was thick and stocky, although nearly as tall as Van.

"Too bad, Van," he said. "But what made you whistle?"

"Thought I better not come to the door," Van answered. "Father don't know I'm out. I had to sneak out o' the window."

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Left 'em at dinner. I don't see how they can sit there so long, eating. But I say, Ted, maybe you could study with me. My tutor stays all summer. Wouldn't your father let you?"

"Dunno," said Ted, gloomy again. "Guess not. He don't let me do much. Maybe, though. It wouldn't bother him any. But I say, Van, what you got on?"

In the lessening light Ted had not noticed Van's clothes before, but now he stared at him in astonishment. The suit seemed to be of silk, dark brown or black, and there was a cap to match, with a flap which could be turned down to cover his neck. Van had been waiting for that moment.

"It's my airship suit," he said, in a hoarse whisper. "That's why I couldn't come the regular way. And I had to hide all the way over."

"Airship suit!" exclaimed Ted. "Why, Van, you haven't got any airship. Where 'd you get the suit?"

"Made it myself," he answered proudly, "out of old umbrellas and a skirt. It's a dandy. And, o' course, I haven't got any airship, but father has. I meant to write you about it, but—well, you know I'm no

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good at writing letters. But the airship's fine, Ted."

"Great benches!" cried Ted.

When Ted said "Great benches!" it showed that no words would express his feelings.

"Yes," Van went on, "it's fine. Father hasn't let me go up in it yet, but he lets me help him work on it, and he says I can go up with him some time soon. And he's got some other things, too. I'll show 'em to you, Ted."

"All right," said Ted, promptly. "Come on."

Van hesitated. "It's almost too dark to see anything there now," he said slowly, "and o' course I can't have any light. But no matter, Ted. We'll just look into the shed and in the morning I can show you all about 'em. I'll race you to the back wall, Ted."

Ted did not stop for answer, but at the last word they both started. Van, the "delicate," ran as lightly as a deer, while Ted pounded along beside him like a locomotive. They reached the wall at the same instant and vaulted it together, landing in a great pasture behind the houses. Then, neck and

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neck, they raced across that pasture and a hay-field, jumping the walls and leaving a track of devastation through the heavy standing grass; then over another wall and Ted stopped.

“No use, Van,” he said, breathing hard. “You can beat me running. Now I’m all out and you could run a mile. I’ve got to get my breath.”

Van grinned at Ted, who was leaning against a tree. “You’re not delicate enough, Ted,” he said. “That’s the trouble with you. But come on.”

The Middleton place was the wonder of Durston. It was at the top of the ridge, the great house, big enough for a hotel, standing far back from King street and giving, from its upper windows, a view of the harbor, with Breakwater Island off the opposite point, and the wide stretch of bay beyond. At one side of the house was a grove of tall old pines. Behind the house was a great garden, and behind the fence at the back of this garden stood the stable, the laundry and the power-house. Mr. Van Deusen Middleton was very rich, rich beyond the comprehension of the more simple folk of Durston. Some of them called his place

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Middleton's Palace, and others called it Middleton's Folly; especially since he had built the big shed in the meadow behind the power-house.

It was this shed to which Van was now taking Teddy Romaine. The wide doors in the end were shut, but Van opened the small door at the side and the two boys stepped in. In the black darkness of that shed Teddy could see nothing at all for some minutes, although he could feel the presence of some great Thing. And presently he could just make it out, vaguely looming over his head.

"My!" he whispered. "Great benches, Van!"

Somehow, he did not feel like speaking aloud in there. But Van had no such feeling, and when he spoke his voice echoed and clattered all around.

"Course," said Van, "you can't see much of anything now, but the big one looks awful big, doesn't it? There's some little ones in here, too. You can see 'em to-morrow. Come on, let's go out."

Teddy was glad enough to get out of the shed. The airship seemed, in the dark, like some great animal. He felt, when he was

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in the shed with it, as if it were a dragon or a plesiosaurus or a pterodactyl or some other of those old monsters he had been reading about, that were not bird nor beast nor fish, but "the both of the three," as Pat Mulloy would have said. Teddy said nothing to Van of his thoughts on dragons and other monsters, and Van seemed to have no such ideas.

"I got to go in now, Ted," he said. "You come over in the morning, right after breakfast."

So Van was gone and Ted ran down through the grove and down the drive. In spite of the excitement of the airship, he felt dissatisfied and out of sorts. He had meant to ask Van a lot of questions about the Durston people—about the boys and perhaps the girls, and what had happened since he was at home last. For his letters from home were perfunctory things, filled with paternal advice, and gave him none of the news he wanted. But something had kept back his questions and he felt that things had not gone quite right.

So, without knowing just why he did it, instead of going directly home, he turned down the hill and into a short street. On



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this street were no great houses. It was comfortable and quiet and the sidewalks were so densely shaded that Ted, jogging along on the turf, ran plump into a girl.

"Oh!" cried the girl, impatiently.

Teddy felt very awkward and much ashamed. Whatever his reasons for taking this long way home, he had not expected to run into any girl.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I didn't know——"


But she interrupted him. "Why, Teddy Romaine!" she said. "I didn't know it was you. I can't see who it is now, it's so dark under these trees. Did you get home to-day?"

"Yes," said Ted.

"And aren't you glad to get home again, Ted?" the girl continued. "I think the beginning of the long vacation is the nicest time."

"Well, ye-es," answered Teddy, slowly, "I s'pose so. I don't know. I don't have so awful much fun at home, Barbara."

"Why, Ted!" she cried. "You oughtn't to say that. There's your father and mother and Van, and there's—there's me—and the others. And Van's father's got an airship. Didn't I write you about it?"



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"No," said Teddy. "But Van came around and we've been to see it. 'Course, it was so dark we couldn't see anything, but I'm going to see it—really—to-morrow."

"Oh!" she said, in a voice as filled with disappointment and envy as Barbara Young's could ever be. "Are you, really?"

"Why?" asked Ted. "You've seen it, haven't you, Barbara?"

"No," she answered. "But I'll tell you what, Ted, I'm going to see it. You'll see. I won't tell you how, but you'll see. Van ought to have asked me, I think."

Teddy was shifting about uneasily, kicking up the turf with his heels.

"Now I guess I'll have to go home, Barbara," he said at last. "I'm supposed to be in my room, studying."

Barbara laughed at that, and Ted grinned in the darkness.

"Well," she said, "I'm sorry, Ted. But good-night."

She did not say what she was sorry for, but Ted understood and was grateful.

"Good-night," he said.

And a few minutes later he was shinning up one of the Grecian columns at the side door, and climbing in at his window.

## CHAPTER II.

The sun has a habit of getting up very early, all through June, and he blazes in at windows and into the eyes of boys who have not closed their shutters, so that they cannot sleep. Perhaps that was why Teddy was up so early the next morning. It was so very early that he did not dare go down stairs and out at the door, for he knew well enough what he would hear if the door slammed. So there was the little porch roof, very handy, and the Grecian columns were very smooth and getting smoother every day. And he ran over the grass, which was wet and sparkling, around the house to the stable, passing by the flower garden without a glance, I am afraid, although the flowers had just made themselves as fresh and beautiful as they could. But Ted's interest, just then, was not in flowers.

Patrick Mulloy was unlocking the stable door; and inside the stable a tremendous racket was going on, a whining and crying

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and scratching, with an occasional whinny and the stamp of a horse's foot. Pat looked up in some surprise, his pleasant smile twisting his red whiskers queerly.

"Marnin' t' ye, Masther Ted," he said. "'Tis up early ye are. But 'tis God's own beeyootif'l marnin', wid the sun shinin' an'— Ah, ye rascal!" he cried, interrupting himself. "Wud ye knock down y'r best fri'nd?"

For, as he slid back the door, the dog who had been waiting so impatiently darted out between his legs, almost upsetting him, and leaped upon Teddy, trying to embrace and kiss him. Ted caught the dog by the fore-paws and held him at arm's length for a minute, laughing at his vain attempts to get nearer. Then he let him go and the dog laughed, plainly enough, and wriggled and wagged, from the tip of his moist, black nose to the end of each long, wavy hair on his tail, the sunlight glinting on his silky, black coat. Then he gave a hurried lick at Pat's hand—missing it entirely—and began to run frantically about, first in a circle, then in loops, twisting around trees and shrubs and Pat's legs, his tail hanging limp and the queer dog-smile still stretching his mouth. Pat and Teddy watched the dog

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until, with a last whirl about Pat's legs, he dropped, panting, in the open doorway.

"Thim setthers," Pat remarked, "—thim setthers is a'most too lively f'r a quite man. But 'tis a good dog, Timothy—a good dog. An' so ye're t'rough wid yer school ag'in, Masther Ted, an' 'tis glad I am f'r t' see ye. An' phwat 've ye been l'arnin' th' while? Ah! thim did langwudges, I shpose, an' Matthew Matics an' th' loike."

Ted laughed. "Yes, Pat," he said, "that's about it, and not as much as I ought, either."

"An' shmall blame t' ye," answered Pat, muttering. "Shure, I niver c'd abide thim did langwudges an' 'tis shmall luck I iver had wid Matthew. Shure, he's no fri'nd o' mine."

"Nor of mine either, Pat," said Ted. "I couldn't do anything with him. So father says I've got to study this vacation."

Pat was leading out the horse to be groomed. He stopped and looked at Ted with honest sympathy.

"An' does he, now!" he said. "'Tis har-rd t' set a b'y shtudyin' wid Matthew Matics in his vacash'n. I do be thinkin', sometimes, Masther Ted, y'r father forgets about b'ys. Shure, he was wan, wanst."

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Ted sat down on a bucket by the stable door and Timothy came and laid his head on Ted's knee.

"I'll bet he never was, Pat," said Ted, gloomily.

"Shure, thin, he was," said Pat, "an' shmall dealin's he had wid Matthew, I'm thinkin'."

Pat shook his head and stooped to feel the horse's legs.

"Did you know him, Pat?" Ted asked quickly—"When he was a boy, I mean."

"Did I know him!" Pat lifted his head and laughed. "Didn't I! An' wa'n't he th' divil's own— But 'tis an old man that do be ta-alkin' too much—ta-alkin' too much. But did I know him! An' me shtable-b'y t' y'r gran'ther!"

Pat bent, chuckling, to his rubbing, and Ted made no answer. It was hard for him to realize that his father had ever been a real boy—and "the divil's own"—

"Now, I tell ye, Masther Ted," said Pat, interrupting his slow thinking, "'fore I do more, just ye take a bit run on th' mare. Was ye on her back sin' ye got home? No? Well, 't will do ye good. An' 'tis wastin' wurruk I'd be. doin' more now."

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Ted jumped up eagerly.

“Will ye have no saddle?” asked Pat.  
“Nor bridle? Well, thin, on wid ye.”

So Ted jumped on, and with only the halter to check her, the mare leaped joyfully down the drive and out at the gate, Timothy racing wildly about her. It was a mad run they had, down the length of the shady street, over a fence at the end and across the grass to the shore. Then carefully, for fear of rolling stones, down the steep bank and into the salt water; and Ted had hard work to prevent the mare from lying down with him. And she scrambled eagerly up the bank again, the dripping dog beside her, and raced back across the meadow. And there was another mad run, back along the shady street; but nobody was about, so all their clatter passed unheeded. And Ted turned the mare into the same quiet street he had run through the evening before, but there were no girls in the way to be run down. So, up the drive again, and the mare stopped and danced before the stable door, while Timothy stood, lolling a dripping tongue.

“Holy Saints, Masther Ted!” cried Pat as he took the halter and Ted slid off. “An’ what ’ve ye been up to now? An’ is it th’

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salt wather ye've had her in, so quick? Now, wudn't she be a beeyootif'l sight whin she's dhry, wid th' white legs of her! Shure, I well knew 'twas wastin' wurruk I was. But 'twill wash off, niver fear."

"I'm sorry, Pat—"

"Ah, thin, niver mind, Masther Ted. Shmall throuble t' wash her legs. An' was it th' foine bit run ye had? Shure, a harse beats anny flyin'-mashin' that iver was ma-ade. An' did ye hear of Mither Middleton's flyin'-mashin' that he has?"

"Van told me," Ted answered. "And I'm going to see it after breakfast."

"'Tis clane daft he is, wid that mashin'," said Pat, "th' ould mashin' an' a whole litter of young wans, out in th' pasthur', f'r all th' warld loike chickens. Ta-ake me advice, Masther Ted, an' kape out of it—th' ould wan. Shure, 'twud fly away wid a house, 'tis that big. But th' harse beats thim all. An' so Miss Barb'ra says. An' she do be be comin' here now an' thin an' she has a bit run on th' mare. She do be a foine ridher, as good as yerself. But whisht, now, an' get along wid ye, f'r I hear y'r father, I'm thinkin'."

Ted ran, without a word, and was half



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way up his Grecian column when he heard his father's voice behind him.

"Edward! What do you mean by climbing those columns? Don't you know that it will make them disgracefully shabby? Come down at once and don't let me catch you doing it again."

Obediently, Ted slid down. "No, sir, I will not," he said, "if I can help it," he added, to himself.

"And, Edward," his father added, less sternly, "I heard you riding the mare in just now. You were riding her too hard, my boy. I am quite willing you should ride her, moderately, as much as you wish—or as much as is good for her. But no racing, sir! No running!"

"But, father," urged Ted, "I'd taken her only a little way—just a short run—and she enjoyed it as much as I did—and Timothy. I couldn't hold her very well, anyway, with only the halter."

"Only the halter!" echoed Mr. Romaine. "Do you mean to tell me that you were riding her bareback, without a bridle? You will break your neck—and serve you right." He glanced at Ted's legs. "And your clothes are a sight, Edward. What do you

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suppose we get you riding clothes for? What a hopeless boy you are!" he muttered, turning away in disgust.

Poor Ted was indeed a hopeless boy for most of the time that he spent at home. Now, all the joy of his ride was blotted out and he felt discouraged. What was the use in trying? He walked around to the door, very slowly, longing for Timothy, and almost wishing that he were a girl, so that he might cry without losing his self-respect.

Breakfast was eaten in silence, Mr. Romaine absorbed in his morning paper. As soon as his father had gone to the train and he could make his escape without attracting attention, Ted slipped out and ran across the fields to the great shed. The big doors stood wide open and he could see the "ould wan," as Pat called it, looming within. Van ran out and hailed him. They went into the shed together and Ted stood, in awe-struck silence, looking up at the airship.

What he saw was a great balloon, sharp at both ends and shaped somewhat like a "peggy." That was up in the top of the shed, and from it hung a network of fine, shining wires, all fastened below, to what

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appeared to be a long boat. There were some curious looking things like tin sails, all folded together against the sides of the boat, and that was all. The balloon swayed a little now and then, but there seemed to be nothing holding it but the boat. While he was wondering about it, Mr. Middleton crawled out of the boat. He was not at all the spotless, bored gentleman whom Ted expected to see, but dirty, interested and smiling.

"Ah, Teddy," he said, pleasantly, "so you are home again. It seems a very little while since you went off to school. I hope you are very well. And how are your father and your mother this morning?"

"Thank you," Ted answered, "I am very well and father seems about as usual. I haven't seen mother to-day. She never comes down to breakfast. You know," he added, rather bitterly, "I don't see her very often."

Mr. Middleton looked surprised. "Indeed!" he said. "That seems a pity, Ted. Every boy should see his mother often—as often as he can. Any plans for the vacation?"

This question plunged Ted in gloom.

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"Father says I've got to study every day," he answered, "'cause I flunked in one or two things." Mr. Middleton looked sympathetic. "'Tisn't any use," Ted went on. "I can't ever make 'em up, alone."

"Why, now, that reminds me, Ted," said Mr. Middleton. "If you really have to study all summer, you might as well join Van. His tutor stays right on here. I'll speak to your father about it."

"Oh, thank you," cried Ted, delighted. "Will you? If you ask him, I'm sure he'll let me. I'd like that awfully."

Mr. Middleton smiled at his delight. "I certainly will, Ted. And what do you think of my airship?"

"Why, I—I hardly know," Ted replied. "It's very big. I don't know much about airships."

"No," said Mr. Middleton, still smiling, "I suppose not. I will tell you about it if you like."

Ted assented joyfully, and Van came a little nearer, ready to chip in with his information whenever he had a chance.

"Now," Mr. Middleton began, "that big boat looks pretty heavy, doesn't it? Take hold of it, Ted, and lift hard."

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It seemed rather absurd to Ted to try to lift that boat, but he took hold, as Mr. Middleton had told him to, and he lifted. But, to his great surprise, he did not have to lift hard. With the first pull the big boat rose slowly in the air until the balloon brought up against the roof of the shed. Ted was so startled that he let go and the boat slowly sank again.

“Great benches!” Ted exclaimed, under his breath.

Mr. Middleton laughed. “Queer, isn’t it?” he asked. “You see, Ted, this airship is arranged so that the balloon just will not lift the car. The balloon is filled with hydrogen, and I can put more in if I wish, so that the balloon stretches out a little bigger and will almost lift the car with people in it. Do you know what hydrogen is? Well, never mind. It is something very light, and we make it in the powerhouse. Perhaps Van’s tutor, Mr. Nash, will tell you about it some time. Now, if I unfold these things that look like sails, you see they spread out pretty wide and I can turn them any way I like. So, when we make the airship go, we can make it slide up on the air, on these sails, or slide down again, or

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we can turn the sails just enough to make it go along straight. Now— Hello, who is this I see?" For Mr. Middleton had looked up, and there stood Barbara Young smiling up at him.

"It's very interesting, Mr. Middleton," said Barbara. "Won't you please go on?"

Ted grinned at Barbara, for he remembered what she had said to him the night before.

"Well, then," Mr. Middleton went on, "you see there are two sets of these sails, one set at each end, and there are rudders, one at each end, too. They are not in place now, and neither are the fans, or screws, for driving the airship. There is one at each end, and I have had them arranged so that they will turn in any direction. Some day I will take you and Van—"

"And Barbara," said that young person, quickly.

Mr. Middleton smiled at the interruption. "Yes," he said, "and Barbara, if your parents will let you, up in the ship, and you can see how all these things work. There are several new ideas of my own—rather new—and good, I think—but you will see. This boat, for instance, is a real boat, made

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of aluminum, as thin as it can safely be made, and it is surprisingly light. It would go in the water perfectly well. All the machinery is in the boat, which is partly decked over, as you see. And I shall have another set of screws for use in the water. There is a tank of compressed hydrogen, and I can let more of it into the balloon or I can pump it back into the tank whenever I wish. But you youngsters must be tired of all this kind of talk. I believe I will let you amuse yourselves with the little machines. What do you think of that, Van?"

"Very good," answered Van. "I'll show 'em."

"But, Mr. Middleton," said Barbara, "what makes it go—the airship?"

Van volunteered the information. "Liquid air," he said. "We make it in the power-house. Father tried liquid hydrogen, but it's too hard to make, and it got everything frozen up, too."

"It almost froze me up," said Mr. Middleton, "the only time I tried it. I didn't know whether I should be able to get back."

Ted had not ventured to make any remarks, for he did not half understand what he had heard. But when Van proceeded to

*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

explain all about the machinery, he soon lost patience. Van's worst fault was his inclination to show off his knowledge. Ted had not much faith in Van's knowledge.

"Oh, I say, Van," he cried at last, "let up. Let's get out the little machines. You know your father said we could."

Mr. Middleton had crawled into the boat again, but he heard and came out. Then he and the two boys got out three of the little machines.

"There!" said Mr. Middleton, when the three machines were out in the meadow. "These are the simplest, and I hardly think you will be able to get completely off the ground with them, the first day. They are not a success for flying, but you can sail a little way with them, after some practice. They are practically the Lilienthal machine, with some slight modification."

Ted did not know whether Lilienthal was a man or a mountain, and he did not care. Van showed how to get into the machine and how to work the rudder and turn the wings. Then there was nothing to do but to run a little, and if the wings were turned the right way the machine would rise off the ground and sail along for a short distance



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before it came down to the ground again. Van and Ted and Barbara amused themselves with these machines until they were tired, and before they got through they had succeeded in learning how to sail a little.

"There are some others," said Van, while they were putting the little machines back in the shed, "that will really go. They work something like a bicycle. I guess father'll let us try those next time."

"All right," said Ted. "I say, Van, let's get some of the other fellows and play Billy-Lee-Stalks." They still played Billy-Lee-Stalks in Durston.

"Oh, Ted," cried Barbara, "you know I can't play that. I think it's mean. And you have forgotten to thank Mr. Middleton or Van."

"No, I haven't forgotten," Ted retorted quickly. "I was going to thank Van before I left, and I didn't see his father anywhere. We're very much obliged, I'm sure. We have enjoyed our morning very much. Haven't we, Barbara?"

Barbara smiled. "Of course," she said. "And now what are we going to do?"

"I'd like to play Billy-Lee-Stalks," mut-

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tered Ted, doggedly, "if we could get enough of the fellows."

"Now, Ted," said Barbara, "I don't think that's fair. You know I'm just dying to play Billy-Lee-Stalks, but I had to promise father that I wouldn't climb fences. If I do, I can't play with you at all. Father says I'm too old to play those games now, anyway."

Van was not favorably impressed with Ted's idea, and he saved him the trouble of making any answer to Barbara's reproach.

"I can't play," he said, rather grandly, "for I've got to help father on the airship. And, besides, it's nearly lunch time."

So Barbara and Ted walked down the drive together, while Van went back to the shed.

"I think," said Ted, confidentially, "that Van's awful stuck on his airship. He thinks he knows a lot."

### CHAPTER III.

"Father," said Ted at breakfast one morning, looking at the paper which hid his father from view, "I want to ask you something."

Mr. Romaine put his paper a little to one side, so that he could look past it at his son. "Well, Edward," he asked, impatiently, "what is it? Don't keep me waiting."

Ted thought he might at least wait until he heard the question before looking so annoyed.

"Father," he said, hesitating a great deal and speaking very low, "I—I'd like to study with Van this summer—with his tutor. He's going to stay all summer."

Then Ted stopped and waited, almost breathless, for the answer. He knew well enough what he expected, but he hoped it might be something different. He did not have long to wait. Mr. Romaine was silent for a minute. Then he scowled and answered impatiently from behind his paper.

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“Nonsense, Edward! Do you think I am made of money, that I can employ a tutor for you all summer? Here I am sending you to the most expensive school, and you haven't the sense to profit by it. No. If you are so dull as that, you will have to suffer for it.”

Poor Teddy was indignant and hurt. His face flushed red with anger and the flush died out. With a great effort he restrained his first impulse to an angry reply. But he could eat no more, and he rose and stood for an instant by his chair, his chin quivering and his face white with the struggle for control.

“I'm very sorry, sir,” he said at last, in rather an unsteady voice, “that I am so dull. I do my best and always have done. If I haven't as much brains as you would like, I do not think it is my fault, and I think, sir, that my father is the last one to twit me with it.”

Teddy's self-control gave out at the last, and he had to run from the room, leaving his father staring after him in amazement.

“Edward!” called Mr. Romaine, angrily.

The boy did not heed, and the father did not call after him again.

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“Well, well!” he muttered, testily. “Who would have thought, now— What an extraordinary boy!”

He tried to read his paper again, but it had lost its interest and he rose to start for the train.

“After all,” he said to himself, as he went out, “the boy is right enough. It isn’t his fault if he isn’t as bright as I’d like to have him. Well, well, I’ll speak to Middleton.”

And the boy of whom he thought with some pity, but with no love, was in the barn, hidden in the hay, his head on his arms, as wretched as a boy can be. And many boys know how wretched that is.

Presently there was a little rustle in the hay beside him, a low whine, and a cold nose was poked into his neck and a warm tongue licked his ear. Ted turned quickly and threw both arms around Timothy’s neck.

“You love me, don’t you, Timothy? And you don’t care whether I’m stupid or not.”

Timothy punctuated with a loving tongue.

“And I believe Pat likes me, too, and I believe—”

But he stopped there and sat quiet a long time, with his arm around the dog’s neck. And that arrangement suited the dog per-



“ ‘ You love me, don't you Timothy ’ ? ‘ and you don't care whether I'm stupid or not ’ ”



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*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

fectly. And when he was quite himself again, Ted got up and started down the stairs, for he heard Pat coming. And that suited Timothy still better, for he was getting tired of sitting still, and he capered about and almost rolled down the stairs.

“An’ is it you, Masther Ted?” cried Pat. But he knew better than to ask any questions. Many a time he had found Ted in the hay. “Will ye be afther wantin’ th’ mare, now?”

Ted shook his head. “Not now, Pat. Maybe by and by. Tim and I are going for a walk now.”

And Pat watched them going down the drive, the boy walking soberly, the dog almost soberly, looking up wistfully at Ted.

“An’ phwat’s his father afther sayin’ t’ th’ poor b’y now? ’Tis a good plain wurrud he nades, that same father, Misther Romaine, an’ ’tis Pat Mulloy ’ll be givin’ it him some foine marnin’. Shure, ’tis shameful.”

So Pat kept talking and muttering to himself as he went about his work, while Ted and Timothy wandered down the street. Ted had no settled purpose, but it happened that he was passing the end of a quiet street just as a girl came up that street. She was



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a tall girl, not quite as old as Ted, and she had fine honest gray eyes and a freckled face and light brown hair. Ted did not know that the freckled face would be beautiful before many years—the gray eyes were beautiful already—but he knew that those eyes had a way of looking into his soul and seeing what was there. And he knew that, somehow, his blues and Barbara Young never got on well together. She sent them flying in no time. She was to be depended upon, but he did not realize at all how much he depended upon her.

Timothy made a dash at the girl the instant he saw her. He knew that she was to be depended upon as well as Ted did. And she was glad to see him and let him jump on her while she talked to Ted.

“Why, Ted!” she began. And then she saw that something was wrong. “Now tell me what is the matter. You know you have to, Ted, and it is no use to say it is nothing.”

Ted knew it well enough, so he told her at once, making as little of it as he could. But it made Barbara very angry.

“I think it’s a shame, Ted,” she cried, with the tears in her eyes, “and I’m glad

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you said it. If my father treated me that way, I'd—I don't know what I'd do, but I'd do something."

"There isn't anything to do, Barbara," said Ted, dejectedly. "Sometimes I've thought of running away—but what good would that do? Father'd be just glad—and mother, too. And I couldn't do anything. It's just because I'm stupid. I know I am, but I can't help it."

Barbara stamped her foot on the sidewalk. "You're not stupid, Teddy Romaine, and I won't have you saying so, or thinking so. You're not. Do you hear? And being honest and brave is better than being just bright, anyway. I'd just like to tell your father some things."

"Oh, Barbara, don't!" cried Ted. "It would only make it worse."

Barbara laughed. "Of course, I'm not going to, Ted. There are lots of things I'd like to do that I haven't any idea of doing. Now, where were you going?"

"Nowhere in particular," Ted answered. "Tim and I were just taking a walk."

"Come up to Van's, then. You know we were going to have that race this morning."


"So we were," said Ted. "I had forgot-

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ten about it. I s'pose it won't matter if Tim goes, too."

It was rather strange that Ted had forgotten that race, for it was one that boys would not be apt to forget. They had all become skilful with the little flying machines they had tried that first day, and Mr. Middleton had let them use some others that would really fly. They were ideas of his own. One of them had two great rudder-like things that worked like fishes' tails, and the other two had fans, like the big airship; but none of them had balloons. So, no matter how hard they worked the pedals, neither Barbara nor Ted nor Van could make one of the machines rise very far above the ground. But it was pretty good fun flying about over the big field, and they were all eager enough for the race.

Mr. Middleton saw that they were all properly seated and in line. Then he asked if they were ready; and at the word "Go!" which he shouted very loudly, they began to work for dear life. Ted had the machine with the fish-tail propeller. He had forgotten to turn his sails right, and when he tried to start the machine simply fell over upon its nose and spilled him out. Barbara



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and Van were moving, very slowly, and only just above the ground, and the accident only made Ted angry and determined to keep up with them. First he had to drive Timothy away and get Mr. Middleton to hold him. Then, as quickly as he could, he tipped the machine up and got in again. This time he made sure that his sails were turned before he pushed on the pedals; and to his delight and rather to his surprise he found himself rising and going ahead pretty fast. The course was three times around the edge of the field, and Van and Barbara were already half way around for the first time. But Ted was stronger than either of them and he did his best. It was a little difficult to turn the corners nicely, but he gained on the others so fast that by the time they were beginning the third round he was almost even with them. Then he wondered how he should pass and he decided that he would go above them.

That would have been easy enough, but just as he could look down and see Van almost beneath him, something happened to Van's machine and it began to mount. Possibly Van was nervous, for Timothy was directly under him, barking and jumping,

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apparently thinking that the whole affair was for his entertainment. Ted swerved to one side and Van, trying to keep his machine down, missed the turn at the corner and ran into the woods that were on the other side of the wall. As he passed, one of the wings of his machine hit one of Ted's propellers and down Ted went, slanting, toward the middle of the field. He came down very gently and got out as quickly as he could, for Mr. Middleton was running across the field, looking anxiously at the woods, and Barbara was trying to turn and get back. Ted turned to the woods and could hardly help laughing, for there was Van, hung up in the top of a tree. Poor Van was in trouble. He could not get his machine out of the tree, and he could not get out of the machine, to get down the tree in the way he knew so well, for there were no large branches near. Mr. Middleton and Ted ran to the shed for a ladder, while Barbara stood calling comforting things up to Van.

When they got back with the ladder it was not much better, and they worked a long while without accomplishing anything, Van getting more nervous every minute. Suddenly they heard a strange voice which

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seemed to come from right above their heads. Ted turned quickly and his mouth hung open with astonishment, for there, just above the tree, was a great airship, as large as Mr. Middleton's, her fans revolving only fast enough to keep her stationary. There was no boat below the balloon, only an open platform; and it was easy enough to see the man, who was looking down at them and shouting.

"Hello, there!" he called. "Can't you get it out?"

"Hello, Eastman!" Mr. Middleton called back. "It isn't easy to get it down without breaking something."

"I'll drop you a line," Mr. Eastman said. "The boy can hang on to it and make it fast to the machine, and I'll lift him out."

So Eastman dropped the line, a very light, strong, linen cord, and Van caught it. Mr. Middleton was not altogether satisfied and wanted line enough for him to hold on to, and more line was paid out and Van made it fast to the machine and dropped the end to his father.

"All right," cried Mr. Middleton.

Then the airship rose gently and moved slowly ahead, and Van and his machine were

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lifted out of the tree and let down lightly in the middle of the field, Mr. Middleton holding the end of the line until Van was on solid ground again. Then the airship came sliding down beside the shed and was made fast to heavy posts that were set in the ground for that purpose.

“Surprised to see me?” asked Mr. Eastman, as he made fast the last rope and glanced up at his balloon to see that it was all right.

Mr. Middleton said he was surprised to see him, but very glad.

“Yes,” said Mr. Eastman. “Came in rather handy, didn’t I? It’s the longest trip I’ve made yet, but it’s no trouble at all. Don’t know how it ’ll be going back. Against the wind, you know; but I guess I can find the level for it. When my cousin Jack gets here we’ll be up in the air all the time, I expect. He said he expected to sail to-day. But I shall expect him when I see him.”

Ted didn’t care much for cousin Jack. He walked slowly over to the machine he had been using, meaning to right it and put it in the shed. But when he had it right side up he got in, thinking he might as well

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fly back. He looked for Barbara, but she was engaged in cheering Van, who was staring at the machine that had been caught in the tree and apparently unable to get over the nervousness and discouragement caused by his mishap.

So Ted started, and he went so well that he took a turn around the field. Mr. Middleton was talking eagerly with the visitor, Mr. Eastman, about airships, and they went into the shed together. Ted came to the wall and, instead of turning, he rose and passed over it. What a fine thing it would be to show Pat how well he could fly.

It was an easy trip to his own house, and there was Pat in the garden, near the back wall.

“Hi! Pat!” Ted called.

Pat looked up. “Holy Saints!” he cried. “An’ is it yersilf, Masther Ted, flyin’ t’rough th’ air loike anny bor-rd!”

Ted was pleased. He had thought Pat would be astonished.

“Edward!” cried a stern voice.

Ted turned, and there was his father. He came to the ground with a thump and got out of the machine rather sheepishly. His father was just the other side of the wall.



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"I—I—thought—I didn't know you were at home, father," he stammered.

"Some business kept me here," answered Mr. Romaine. "I merely sent word to the office that I should not be in to-day. What were you doing in that thing, Edward?"

"Only—only flying, father," said poor Ted, simply. He did not know what wrath that might bring down on his head.

"Only flying!" said Mr. Romaine, smiling rather grimly. "Only flying! You will certainly break your neck, Edward. But it looked very easy."

"Oh, it is," cried Ted, eagerly. "It is, after you have learned how."

"I think," observed Mr. Romaine, "I believe that I will take that machine back, myself. I have a little business with Mr. Middleton."

"But, father," Ted objected, faintly, "you don't know how—do you?"

"If you can do it, Edward," his father answered, "probably I can. Perhaps you will tell me briefly how I should sit in the machine. Then I will manage the rest."

Ted had hard work not to laugh, for he remembered his own experience while he was learning. It was not so easy as it

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looked. But he showed his father how to sit in the machine. He would have shown more, but his father would not listen.

"Now," said Mr. Romaine, "I will start. You may walk over, Edward. You will find me there."

With that he started very vigorously. The machine rose beautifully, skimmed over the wall, fell a little, mowed down a row of rose-bushes and sailed in at the open door of the barn. There was an ominous crash and the noise of the stamping of a frantic horse.

"Holy Mother!" cried Pat, as he bolted for the barn, with Ted at his heels.

Mr. Romaine emerged from the barn as they reached it.

"There seems to be something the matter with the steering arrangements, Edward," he announced. "I will walk over and I wish you would see if anything is broken."

Pat had run in to quiet the mare and Ted followed.

"Praise the Saints," said Pat, "'twas on'y th' laddher he broke. I ta-at shure 'twas th' new car-rt he'd shmashed. An' th' mare's fair cra-azy wid that thing flyin' in here. Shmall blame t' her."

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The mare was soon quiet and, with Pat's help, Ted managed to get the machine out of the barn. It was not hurt in the least, fortunately, and Ted climbed in and started. He reached the Middletons' field just as his father walked in past the shed. It was with some pride that Ted sailed gracefully around the field once and brought the machine gently to the ground by the door of the big shed.

Mr. Romaine was interested. "Really, Edward," he said, "you do that very well. Was the thing injured?"

Ted assured him that it was not, and hurried off to join Barbara and Van, who were still beside Van's machine.

"What you doing, Van?"

"Why, noth—I—you see—" began Van, briskly, "I am examining my machine to see how much it has been damaged. There seems to be a hole in one of the wings."

Ted looked the machine over very carefully and glanced at Barbara. There was a twinkle in her eyes.

"Why don't you get in?" asked Ted. "Come on. No use standing here looking at it."

Elated by his recent success, Ted did not

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wait for help, but got into the machine and started. It went, although it wobbled badly and it was not easy to steer. But, after zigzagging over the field for a few minutes, he managed to land near the shed. Mr. Romaine was disappearing in the distance and Mr. Middleton turned to Ted.

"Well, Ted," he said, cordially, "your father has just been talking to me about you, and we have arranged that you shall study with Van—with his tutor—that is, if you want to."

"Oh!" cried Ted. "If I want to!"

He could hardly speak for an instant. Then he called after his father, but Mr. Romaine seemed not to hear. Ted turned and ran back to Barbara and Van, leaving Mr. Middleton smiling at him.

"Father's going to let me study with you, Van," he said. He spoke quietly enough, but his eyes were shining and he looked at Barbara.

"Oh, Ted," she said, softly, her own eyes shining, "isn't that splendid! I'm so glad."

"Be very nice," said Van, in his abrupt way.

"I'm glad," said Ted, "and I must go home and—and—"

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"Do it nicely, Ted," said Barbara.

And Ted understood and ran.

Mr. Romaine met him as he came up the drive.

"Father," said Ted, breathless with running, "I want to thank you. Mr. Middleton—he told me—and I think it's—it's awfully good of you. I shall—shall do my best. And, father, I'm—I'm very sorry for—for what I—I said this morning. I'm sorry."

Mr. Romaine smiled complacently. He felt that he had done his duty by his son.

"Very well, Edward," he said. "We will pass that over and say nothing more about it—although it was not a proper manner for a boy to use to his father. I hope you will make the most of your opportunities, Edward."

"I will do my best, father."

"And there is another thing, Edward," Mr. Romaine went on. "Middleton—Mr. Middleton was explaining to me the operation of his airship. It seems quite safe—rather safe, that is, for an airship. He seemed to want to take you up in it. I have no objection to your going with him for a short flight—not far from the ground, you

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understand. He understands my wishes and agrees with me perfectly. He is careful, I think."

Ted fairly beamed. "Oh, yes," he said. "And I'm ever so much obliged, father."

Ted turned toward the Middletons as he spoke. "Look, father!" he cried.

Mr. Romaine looked. There was a curious-looking object sailing off over the trees at a great speed. It did not look very large, at that distance.


"Looks like a thirteen-inch shell," muttered Mr. Romaine.

"It's Mr. Eastman's airship," said Ted, "going home. Isn't it easy?"

## CHAPTER IV.

At last the day had come when Mr. Middleton had promised to take Van and Barbara and Ted for their first flight in the big airship. It was not to be much of a flight; just around the field, possibly as far as the Romaines, and only far enough from the ground to clear the walls safely. But they had looked forward to it eagerly.

There was so much to be done to the big ship that it was afternoon before Mr. Middleton had it out of the shed and anchored to the posts in the field. And it was another hour before he gave them the word to get into the boat. It had been very hot all day, but that seemed to suit him exactly. He said his engines would work all the better; and he was pottering around them, too thoroughly absorbed in what he was doing to notice that great thunder-heads were rising in the west. Ted saw them and so did Barbara—and so did Van at last, although he was inside the boat much of the time, helping his father.



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“Well, I don’t know about this,” said Van, as he surveyed the great gleaming mountain of cloud. It was not yet high enough to see the blackness underneath. “Father, there’s a thunder-squall coming. What do you think?”

Mr. Middleton looked up at the storm. It was yet a long way off, but evidently he was disappointed.

“Well, Van,” he said, “I don’t know. It won’t reach us for some time yet. It seems a pity to give it up, now that we are all ready. We shall have plenty of time to go around the field once or twice, I think. What do you think, Barbara?”

“I think it looks like snow-pudding,” she answered, laughing, “or a meringue. And I’m not afraid of either.”

Mr. Middleton laughed. “Nor of anything else, I guess, Barbara. But I think we will be quite safe to go around once, Van. We can easily get in ahead of the squall. Now, there’s one more thing I’ve forgotten. You just stay quietly in the car and you’ll be all right. I will be back in a minute.”

He got out and the car swayed and stopped with a jerk.

“Why, look!” cried Ted. Then he



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laughed. "Of course," he said, "the balloon is just filled enough for all four of us. And when your father got out, up we went. But it startled me."

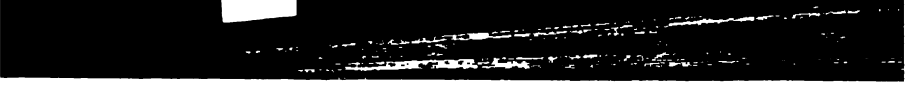
The car had brought up on the mooring rope and hung, motionless, a few feet from the ground. There was not a breath of wind and the great storm cloud was rising fast. Van began to look worried, and Ted might have felt relieved if the trip had been postponed.

"Look, Ted," cried Barbara. "There's Timothy."

Timothy, full of joy, was galloping across the fields, his long ears flapping.

"Confound it!" said Ted. "I told Pat to keep him tied. He hates to be tied, and he's gnawed his rope. I see the end of it. Go home, Tim!"

But Tim did not want to go home. He capered and barked and whined and stood on his hind legs. Ted's orders were vain. Finally Van, who was arrayed in his wonderful airship suit, leaned over the side and shouted at him. Tim was surprised. He did not know what to make of that strange figure with flapping brown ears and he retreated under the car. Nothing more was



“ ‘ He’s chewing the rope! ’ ”

*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

heard from him and Ted supposed he had gone home. Van was getting more and more anxious as the storm drew nearer and Mr. Middleton did not appear.

"No use," he said at last, "I don't think we ought to go to-day. The wind'll begin to puff up in a few minutes."

Barbara and Ted both agreed.

"We'd better get out," said Van.

He called to his father, but there was no response.

"Pull on the rope," Ted suggested. "We'll go down easy enough. Then we can fasten it closer and get out."

"Yes," answered Van, "I was just going to. You'll have to help and maybe Barbara will."

He stepped to the other side of the car, where the rope was fastened, leaned over to take hold, and gave a yell of terror.

"He's chewing the rope!" he cried. "Come quick and pull. Go away, Tim! Get out!"

Ted jumped and caught the rope with Van. At the first pull there was a little jar and both Ted and Van sat down hard.

Ted got up quickly and looked over. The ground was falling swiftly away from them.

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The rope had parted. Already Timothy looked like a toy dog and Mr. Middleton, who had come running out of the shed, seemed no larger than a doll. The great elm trees looked like lilac bushes and the roofs of the houses were getting smaller every second. But the car did not seem to be moving. At least, they could feel no motion.

“We’re going up, Van,” said Ted, quietly.

Van only groaned.

“Van!” called Barbara, sharply. “We’re going up. Start that pump thing, so that the balloon will be smaller and go down. Don’t you know what I mean? Get some of that hydrogen stuff out of it.”

Van had said, a good many times, that he knew all about the airship machinery, and could run it himself if he had the chance. Now he had the chance. He got up in frantic haste and turned the valve between the hydrogen tank and the balloon. It was arranged so that the gas could not flow the wrong way if the valve was turned right. Of course, as the pump was not running, the hydrogen would not flow from the balloon into the tank, where it was compressed. Van had forgotten that. He should not

*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

have touched the valve at all until the pump was running. But, worse than that, he had turned the valve the wrong way. The gas flowed into the balloon, which opened out lengthwise, like a telescope, and grew rapidly larger. The earth was dropping away like a stone and Ted did not dare look over the side of the boat again. He called to Barbara.

"Don't look over, Barbara! You'll get dizzy. Van has done it the wrong way, somehow."

"Turn it back, Van!" cried Barbara. "Turn it back! We're going faster."

"Start the engine, Van!" cried Ted. "Hurry!"

Poor Van seemed dazed and did nothing. Barbara turned the valve back herself, and Ted began looking over the engine, although he knew very little about it. Van recovered enough to help him, and they worked over it together for some time. But the engine was obstinate and would not start. Seconds counted, then.

"I wonder where we are," said Ted.

"Look through the telescope," Van suggested. "Don't look over."

Ted had forgotten about the telescopes.

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There were two powerful telescopes set into the bottom of the boat, so that a person sitting or lying inside could see, quite safely, everything beneath. Ted looked through the nearest.

“Goodness!” he said. “The land’s going under us like an express train. I s’pose we must be in a wind. I can’t tell where we are.”

Van was still working over the engine and at last it started.

“We’re awful near the cloud,” said Barbara, quietly. “I don’t think there’s any use having the engine go, because we can’t get away from it now, and we sha’n’t know where we’re going. But you might start the pump, Van, and make the balloon a little smaller. I think we’d better have it so that we just keep up.”

They were, indeed, “awful near” the cloud and rushing at it very fast. The noise of the thunder was sharper than they were used to hearing and they could see the gleam of the lightning. They had been carried up by the balloon above the reach of the squall-wind and into a current of air that was taking them straight at the front of the cloud. All three sat on the bottom of the boat and

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looked in terrified silence at the ragged wisps and masses of smoky scud directly in their path. That ragged, fringed, rolling front was so much bigger than it looked from the ground! If the airship should get caught in that, could anything prevent its being tipped over—turning a somersault—and dropping them all out? Ted was wondering, in a dull way, how it would feel, and thinking that perhaps, for once, his father and mother would be really sorry—after they had lost him. But, a second later, the airship shot upward, leaving the rolling gray front far below, and they were enveloped in a dense fog—the cloud itself.

Ted gasped, involuntarily. What had done it? He turned and saw Barbara sitting by the hydrogen valve, her brave eyes shining. It was Barbara who had kept them out of that peril. Ted could only guess what might have happened, but there was no thought of thanks then. As for Van, he was very white, the freckles standing out upon his face like spots of brown paint, and he probably could not have spoken if he had tried.

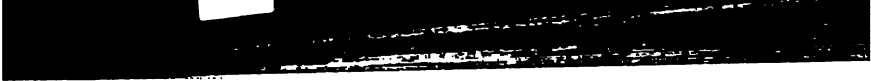
Somehow, it was less terrifying in there, with the fog so thick all about them, than it

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was outside, where they could see how far down the solid earth was. Ted breathed more freely and forgot to wonder how it was going to feel to fall all that way. At the very first it was cold. The cloud beneath was boiling and tumbling about, as they could see dimly, and Ted was surprised that it was not wet. He knew they must be moving, although he could feel no motion; and in what seemed to him a long time, but was really, perhaps, a minute, it was as dark as night and the glare of lightning was very near. The fog, as it touched his face, was warm and wet and presently he felt a fine, cold drizzle.

Ted did not mind the wet, but he wished there was daylight enough to see by. But there was only the flashing and glowing of lightning all about them. Little flares of blue light burned on the sharp points of the boat and tinglings and twitchings ran up and down his back and out at the ends of his fingers. When the lightning flashed it showed Van's face like that of a ghost. The thunder came in sharp cracks, with the lightning, as if all the great pines on the Middleton place had split open at once; and then came other sharp cracks, fainter and fainter.





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Ted was not usually afraid of lightning, but that made him feel very solemn. They were a long time in that blackness, with the whole thick air about them filled with a dull glow or split by jagged streaks of lightning; and in the intervals the boat and their faces showing dimly in the ghostly light of the little blue flames. Ted jumped at the sound of a voice.

“I’m afraid,” said Van, in a very shaky voice, “—I’m afraid——what if the lightning should strike the balloon! Just think—that hydrogen—”

Van’s voice died away to a whisper. Ted did not want to “just think,” and he tried hard to think of something else. It seemed a year to him that they were in that darkness; to Van it seemed a lifetime. It was growing colder and it was not so dark. Positively, there was a glimmer of daylight. The balloon was unharmed, so far, and the lightning was almost entirely below them. The little blue flames were gone. Ted felt more cheerful. There was a curious rattling sound over his head.

“It’s hail,” said Barbara, anxiously. “Oh, I hope it won’t make any holes in the balloon.”

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The hailstones were pattering on the boat. Ted rubbed his hand over some of them. They were very small.

“I don’t believe they’ll do any harm, Barbara,” he said. And his voice sounded queer and hollow, but it did not shake, as Van’s did.

“You see,” said Van, making a brave attempt to appear unafraid, “these hailstones are carried up and down in a thunder-storm. They usually go around several times, and every time they go around there is a coating of ice deposited—or maybe the outside melts—or, I guess there is water condensed on it in the warm parts of the cloud and that freezes again in the cold part. Probably these small hailstones have only been around about once. If you break a hailstone open you will find it made up of layers of ice, that way. I guess this is the cold part we’re in now.”

Ted guessed it was, too. He did not have to be a very good guesser to know that. He was not much interested in Van’s information, but he knew that it was very cold and the cloud felt dry and sharp against his face and hands. Van’s teeth were chattering. His airship suit was not very warm.

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"No use," said Van, trying to speak in his usual brisk way, "I'm about freezing. I guess I'm having a chill."

He poked about in the car and found a thick pea-jacket of his father's and a sweater. He put them both on and lay down. Ted looked at Barbara and saw that she was shivering, although she tried not to show it.

"You take my coat, Barbara," he said, quickly stripping it off and offering it to her.

Barbara protested vigorously, but Ted insisted and put the coat around her shoulders.

"Well, anyway, Ted," she said, "you sit up here by me, and if you're cold we'll sit back to back. That'll keep your back warm."

Ted was willing enough to do that, for he was colder than he had ever been in his life before; and Van, with all the wraps there were, was lying down, groaning with the cold. So they sat for a long time without speaking, getting colder every minute. But they seemed to be getting farther and farther above the lightning.

"I think," said Ted at last, "that we shall be out of this pretty soon. The storm is all below us now, and see how much brighter it is, Barbara. It almost seems like sun-

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shine. I guess we must have been carried right up through the cloud. And there isn't any hail up here, nor any rain."

Sure enough, in five minutes more it was plainly sunshine above them, although the cloud about them was still very dense. But suddenly the cloud seemed to drop away from them and they were enveloped in bright sunshine, while below them spread great mountains and heaving billows of brilliant white. The thunder rumbled far below.

"My!" said Barbara. "Doesn't it feel good, Ted? How hot the sun is! Seems to me I never felt it so hot in my life before. And see how the cloud boils! We've come right up through it, haven't we? I didn't know the top of a thunder-cloud boiled like that. It looks like boiling white suds."

"Yes," answered Ted, "and I can't see the edge of it. I wonder how far it goes and where we are."

He looked up at the balloon.

"Great benches!" he cried. "Look at the balloon. And we're going up faster, aren't we?"

Barbara looked up. The balloon was stretching out—not very fast, but fast enough for them to see it grow.

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"Oh," she cried, "what makes it? I think we're high enough. But I'm glad to get out of that cloud. Don't you think it's interesting to see how the top of that cloud keeps tumbling about, just as if it was steam puffing out of a chimney?"

"We-ell, ye-es," Ted answered, rather hesitatingly, "I s'pose it is. I guess I'll think it's more interesting after we get back home again."

"Why, Ted," said Barbara, "I don't feel afraid now. But I did when we first got into the storm. Just hear it, 'way down there! You don't feel afraid now, do you?"

"Not much—maybe a little," Ted confessed. "But I think now that we'll get back, and I didn't think so at first. I thought how it would feel to fall all that way."

"Oh, Ted!" cried Barbara. "How horrible! Don't! Now I think this is rather fun," she pursued, "seeing all this."

"So do I," Van quavered suddenly, to the great surprise of both Barbara and Ted. "I have, all along. I wasn't afraid, any time—but I'm awful cold. I guess if you had a chill—"

Barbara smiled. "Sit up, Van," she said, "and let the sun shine on you. It's begin-

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ning to get down pretty low, and it must be rather late. Of course it's cold in the shadow—awfully cold. See, there's a coating of ice all over everything in the shade."

"And besides," said Ted, "we ought to start the pump and the engine. We're too high up now. You see the balloon's got bigger. I s'pose it was the sun shining on it, but I don't know so much about those things as Van does."

Van felt flattered. "I don't believe it'll get any bigger," he said, "because the sun's getting low and won't be so hot. And when it gets dark, if we're up here, it'll be so cold the balloon 'll get small. Besides, the air up here is kind of thin and doesn't hold us up so well. Don't you feel it so? It's hard for me to breathe enough."

"Why, so it is," said Barbara. "I didn't know what was the matter. And my ears feel as if they were blown up and I've got a kind of a headache."

Ted put up his handkerchief suddenly. "My nose has begun to bleed," he said. "And I tell you, Van, we've got to get away from this, somehow. We're going right along with the storm—and I'm not sure," he added, "that we aren't getting towards the

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head of it. You can tell by the sound. We've got to get to the other end, somehow."

Ted moved over to the pump and Van rose, weak and protesting, and helped him. The inside of the boat was still slippery with the thin coating of ice. The ice on the outside had melted.

It was not easy to make the pump work and Van explained that it was because it was so cold.

"Well," answered Ted, "if we can make it go a little we shall get lower. Then perhaps we can make the sun shine on it."

"That's just what I was going to try to do," said Van. "I guess we can make it go a little."

Presently the pump started, reluctantly, and Barbara turned the valve. The pump would work but very slowly and was soon completely encased in ice. But the balloon was closing up a little and they slowly sank nearer to the boiling top of the cloud. Ted was surprised at the quantity of the ice on the pump, and it was queer-looking ice, all ridges and needles and patterns, like frost.

Van explained, offhand, why the ice formed. "Better not touch it," he said. "It must be awful cold."

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Ted's nose-bleed had stopped and they worked at the engine; and by the time that was started it was time to stop the pump. They were low enough. Thick frost formed immediately on the engine, too.

"Now, Van," said Ted, "if you know how to work those wings, you do that and I'll steer."

Van did better at the wings and Ted found the steering easy enough. It was much like steering a boat. He turned the airship toward the sun. Barbara kept a lookout through one of the telescopes.

For a long time there was nothing to be seen but the boiling surface of the storm-cloud, now full of deep blue shadows. There was less noise of thunder and the storm seemed to be losing energy. They had been running that way for nearly an hour when Ted thought he could see breaks in the cloud. He was sure it was thinner; but he had no idea what it was that he saw through the breaks. Barbara told him before long.

"I can see right through—oh, now it's gone," she said, in an awed voice. "But, Ted, what I saw was water, and I'm sure it is the ocean."



## CHAPTER V.

Barbara's announcement was no surprise to Ted, but Van cried out and then quickly checked himself.

"I was afraid we were over the ocean," said Ted, quietly. "You know all thunderstorms go that way. I only wish I knew how far out to sea we've been carried. We must have been in that cloud pretty near an hour."

"More," snapped Van, quickly; "a lot more, I know."

"Well, you know, Van," said Barbara, "I guess it seemed longer than it really was. Such times always do."

"It was more than an hour," Van insisted. "I know it was."

"Well," said Ted, "s'pose it was. Then, very likely, we've been carried sixty miles out to sea—maybe a hundred. I think that storm was going faster than most of 'em. Can you see any land, Barbara?"

Van had to show Barbara how to turn the

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telescope to look where they hoped the land would be. There were clouds in the way again, but they soon became more broken, so that there were short glimpses between. Ted could distinguish nothing at all but color, and he could not have told what color it was. It might have been blue or green or purple, or just a dull gray.

"No use," said Barbara, after a long stare through the glass. "I can't see anything but the water. And over by the edge it's so kind of dark and mixed up with the sky and the water, I couldn't tell whether there was land there or not."

It was a disappointment, but there was nothing to do about it and they kept driving on—not very fast, for the engine did not work quite right. They amused themselves by taking turns looking through the telescopes, but there was nothing to be seen but water. And that was so far away they could not tell whether it was rough or smooth, especially as they were not used to seeing the water that way, looking right down on the top of it. Then even the water ceased to be of any interest, for it lost its brightness and became merely a dull gray. Gradually it grew duller and darker.

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"I rather guess," said Ted, "that the sun must have set down there. It seems to be getting dark on the water. The sun is pretty low, even up here—and I should think we must be four or five miles high."

"Let's go down lower," said Van, hastily. "Don't you think we're too high? Shall we have to stay up after dark?"

"I don't see how we're going to help it, Van," Ted answered. "We're going as well as we know how to. I think we must have a wind against us. Maybe we'd better get down nearer, so that we can see."

"And besides," said Van, "the wind up here is stronger than it is down lower. I forgot about that. We might get into a breeze that is blowing the other way."

So Van steered them down, very cautiously, by turning the wings. The sun dropped quickly out of sight behind the edge of the world and they were in a twilight which left them rapidly as they sank. When they were within about half a mile of the water, Ted thought it was time to stop.

"We don't want to get too low," he said. "And there doesn't seem to be any wind down here. If we get too low we might get right into the water. We couldn't see it

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very well when it gets dark. And some ship might come along and run into us."

Van did not think it very likely that they would be run into, but he was willing enough to keep away from the water.

"Perhaps there'll be some ship coming along," Barbara suggested. "Let's look before it gets quite dark. There isn't any way of seeing when it's dark, is there, Van? Seems to me there ought to be a light or something."

"Why," said Van, "there is. I had forgotten about it, but I'll see if I can make it go. You come and steer, Ted. Barbara may as well look now, because perhaps I can't run the light."

So Ted steered and Barbara kept at the telescope while Van worked away at something, they could not see what. There was hardly a glimmer of light left on the sea and the stars were coming out one by one, when Barbara exclaimed:

"Oh, Ted, I do see a ship. I see her lights, but I can't make out what it is. You come and look and I'll steer."

Barbara crept up to Ted as she spoke and he took her place at the telescope. He looked long and hard.

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"I think," he said at last, "it's an ocean steamer. We must have been farther out than I thought."

As Ted spoke a dazzling white light shone out from the bottom of the boat, faintly illuminating a great circle on the water.

"I've got it going," said Van.

It was not until Van spoke that Ted was aware of the light, for his telescope was turned upon the steamer. When he turned it straight down he had hard work to find the lighted spot. The surface of the water appeared as dark as before.

"I can't find it, Van," he said.

"No," answered Van, "'course not. It doesn't light up the water much when it points straight at it, but it goes right in. The top of the water looks just about as dark as it did before. But if it came slanting you'd see it, very bright, like moonlight. Or if there was anything there—a boat or anything—"

"There is!" cried Ted, suddenly, in some excitement. "It looks like a launch. They haven't any light, have they? Why, it looks like the fishing club launch. It—oh, now it's gone. Can't you find it, Van? Turn the light around and see if you can't find it."

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Van turned the light about until he thought he had covered every spot where the boat could possibly be, and Ted followed the cone of light with his telescope. But no launch could be found. It seemed to have vanished completely.

"No use," Ted said at last. "We can't find it again. But I think that was queer—where it went to—and what do you s'pose it's 'way out here for, and without any light?"


"Dunno," said Van.

"Look at the steamer again, Ted," said Barbara. "And, Van, don't turn the light on it yet. I guess they'd think it was pretty queer, seeing a searchlight coming out of the sky. Maybe they'd put it in the papers that they'd discovered a new planet."

Van laughed for the first time since they had left the ground; but Van's laughs were never very mirthful. Ted was busy at his telescope again.

"Now I see it," he said. "She's coming up, going faster than we are. Don't you want to watch, Barbara? I'd just as lief steer."

Barbara was glad to have the chance and she changed places with Ted. Van was at



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the other telescope, and from his place he could manage the light and the wings. They flew along slowly for some time, the great steamer gaining on them rapidly. Van was letting them down, too, and when the steamer was nearly under them they were only a few hundred feet above her.

“There’s a funny little blue light moving along her deck,” said Barbara. “It looks as if somebody was shielding it with his hand. Turn the light on her now, Van.”

In an instant the deck of the steamer was lighted.

“Oh,” cried Barbara, “there’s a man with a bundle and a light on the top of it, and—it looks like a life-preserver. Now he’s thrown it overboard. How queer! And he doesn’t seem to notice this light at all. I s’pose he thinks it’s moonlight, but there isn’t any moon yet. Don’t you think we ought to see what that bundle was—or maybe the little boat we saw will find it. Now he’s looking around and there’s another man—oh!”

Barbara shrieked and Van yelled at the same instant.

“He threw him right overboard! cried Van. “I saw him go.”

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“Oh, turn us around, Ted,” cried Barbara. “He threw a man overboard. We must try to pick him up. Quick! Work the light, Van, and see if you can find him.”

What they had seen was enough to shock steadier nerves than theirs. The man who had been carrying the bundle turned from casting it overboard to find another man regarding him with a quiet smile of satisfaction. The first man jumped back with a start of surprise and the second man, apparently having seen all he wished, turned back. At that, the first man leaped upon the other, struck him savagely in the head with something he held in his hand, and, without losing an instant, pushed him over the rail near which they were standing. His victim struck limply, slid over the smooth plates and dropped into the sea. It was this, taking place too rapidly for Barbara to describe it, which had made her and Van cry out. The assailant, giving, at last, a frightened glance up at the light which shone upon him out of the heavens, ran along the deck and disappeared.

Without knowing just what had happened Ted turned the airship about, while Van shifted the wings, to let them down, and




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*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

stopped the engine. Then he "worked the light," as Barbara had asked, until they thought they saw a head bobbing in the water. It took all Van's attention to keep the light on that bobbing head while the airship sailed gently down, like some monstrous hawk, in narrowing circles. The steamer was far beyond call, and when Ted heard from Barbara what had happened, he had little hope of finding the victim of that attack. It seemed most unlikely that a man as badly hurt as he must be could keep afloat or even make any intelligent effort to do so. But there he was; and, guided by Barbara's directions, Ted brought the airship down until the boat-shaped car rested lightly upon the water within ten feet of him.

Much to their surprise, the man in the water seemed to be in full possession of his senses and was, to all appearances, unharmed. He was making no attempt to swim, but keeping afloat easily and apparently waiting for them. He said nothing and made no outcry; but while they were wondering how they could get an injured man into the boat, he reached it in two strokes and stretched his hand up to the

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gunwale. Ted would have helped him, but with an exhibition of strength that seemed nothing less than marvelous, the man pulled himself over the side. Even then he did not speak and, as there was no light within the boat, it was impossible to see his face. He seated himself, dripping, on the bottom of the boat.

"What steamer was that?" Ted asked excitedly. "We saw what happened and saw him push you over—at least, the others did. I was steering."

The man made no reply, although he seemed to be making an effort to speak. But his effort failed and he sank lower and lower until, without having made a sound, he was lying, face down, upon the bottom.

"I guess he's fainted," said Ted.

Barbara was beside the man at once. "He must be badly hurt, after all," she said. "Can't you get a light into the inside of the boat, Van?"

"Oh, yes," Van answered. "This light will turn right up into the boat. It will turn anywhere."

He turned the light as he spoke and the whole interior of the boat was brilliantly lighted.

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"Oh!" cried Barbara. "The whole back of his head is covered with blood. I hope—I hope—he isn't—"

She broke off there.

"I hope not," said Ted, fervently. "I'll get some water."

There was no steering to be done then, and Ted dipped up some water in a little aluminum bucket which he found hanging near him. Barbara bathed the injured head gently with her handkerchief and called for Ted's and Van's. The man was evidently in a desperate state.

"We ought to get him somewhere," said Barbara, "so that he can have a doctor. I'm afraid, if we don't, he'll—"

Again she broke off without uttering the word she dreaded.

"I'm afraid he will," said Ted. "But it'll be some time before we can get anywhere. I s'pose we'd better go up again. I'll open this valve and Van can start the engine."

The ice had almost all melted off the engine. Barbara took a piece which had just dropped off, wrapped it in one of the handkerchiefs and laid it on the man's head.

"This kind of an engine is convenient

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sometimes," she said. "But see, Ted, the stars are all gone. How shall we know which way to go?"

"Well," Ted replied, "I don't know. Of course I can't tell by the wind. Perhaps if we go slowly I can tell a little by the water. I'm afraid it's fog that hasn't got down to us yet."

The airship did not seem to want to rise from the water. Finally it bounded upward.

"It was sort of like a sucker, wasn't it?" said Ted. "And now we're going up too fast. You'll have to start the pump, Van."


The pump started with little trouble and they soon stopped rising. Ted looked back.

"There's that little blue light," he said, "a long way back. The bundle floated, didn't it? I wonder why the man threw it over and what's in it."

"Can't stop to see," said Van. "It's gone now. Looks as though—yes, wait till I turn on our searchlight."

He turned the light upon the spot where the bundle had been floating and they caught a moment's glimpse of the launch. Then it was gone, as mysteriously as before.

"They picked it up, I guess," said Ted. "I think it's queer and I can't help won-



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dering what that launch is doing 'way out here."

As Ted spoke the fog descended upon them and they were lost as completely as they had been in the thunder-cloud.

What happened to them up there in the fog there was no way of knowing. Ted had had a lingering hope that he could tell something by the wind, but when he had thought about that a little he knew he was mistaken. For whatever wind there was would take them with it, and however they went the wind would seem to be just the same. They might be going in the right direction or exactly wrong and it would seem just the same, or they might be going around in a circle, which was the most likely thing of all. Ted thought about it for a long time but could think of no way; and all that time the airship was going ahead slowly—somewhere, he had no idea where.

"I wish," he said at last, "that we had a compass. We ought to have one. Isn't there one, Van?"

"Nop," Van answered, briefly. "Father forgot it. That was what he was looking for when we got away. Must have one fastened in."

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"Yes," said Ted, "a binnacle. That's all right, but it doesn't help us now. I haven't the slightest idea where we are going. And another thing, Van. Don't you think we ought to save up the liquid air till we can see where to go? How much is there?"

"Oh," said Van, "I guess it'll last about six or seven hours longer."

"Let's save it," Ted urged. "We don't know how long it'll take us to get home."

"Isn't any use," was Van's comforting reply. "Can't save it, you know."

"Why not?" asked Ted.

"Why," answered Van, proud of his knowledge, "it evaporates, you know—just turns to common air—sort of boils—and goes away."

"Oh!" said Ted, vaguely. He did not see why.

"Can't keep it covered up tight," Van went on. "It would explode and blow the whole thing to smithereens. It's all covered as much as it can be, and it's got a lot of stuff around it to keep it cold. Really, the way the engine's working now, it doesn't use up much faster than it would if we stopped the engine."



“ ‘ There’s the Dipper,’ said Barbara ‘ and the North Star ’ ”



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*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

"Well, then," said Ted, "what would we do if it was all used up?"

"Dunno," Van replied. "Just float around, I guess."

Barbara had been listening intently.

"Why not go up higher, Ted?" she asked. "The fog probably isn't very deep, and if we can get above it, we can see the stars. I know the North Star."

"So do I," said Ted. "I didn't think of that."

He opened the valve and in less than a minute the fog dropped away below them. The stars were clear and bright above and Ted looked where he thought the North Star ought to be. He could not find it.

"There's the Dipper," said Barbara, pointing up to the left, "and the North Star."

"Ho!" cried Ted. "So it is. That's funny. We are going just the wrong way. I was looking over on the other side. I guess we're going in a circle. It's a good thing you thought of coming up here, Barbara."

So the airship was turned toward the west again and the speed increased. Ted suggested that they take turns sleeping. He

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said he would wake them when it was time for their watch. The others agreed and Van lay down and went to sleep at once. But the injured man stirred a little and Barbara wet the handkerchiefs again and put on another piece of ice. She could not sleep.

They flew along for hours. Ted was not sleepy. He sat there with his hand on the wheel, looking out over the vague grayness under them or up at the stars to keep his course.

"Ted," said Barbara, at last, "you change with me now. I'm all stiff, sitting this way so long, and I'd like to change. If he stirs just wet the handkerchiefs again. I wish we could get somewhere. It must be almost morning."

They changed, as Barbara suggested, and as Ted moved he saw a faint something ahead.

"Look, Barbara," he said. "Isn't that a kind of a bright spot, 'way ahead of us? What do you s'pose it is?"

Barbara looked. "I don't know," she said, "unless it's the light from some city shining up through the fog. Maybe the fog is pretty thin here, and we're lower down

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than we were. What city do you think it could be?"

"Dunno," Ted answered. "Might be Boston or it might be New York—or it might be Chicago, for all I know," he added, with a laugh. "But I guess we'd better not go so fast. If it's a city, we're almost over the land and we'll go past Durston and miss it entirely."

He slowed down the engine until they were barely moving, looked over again at the spot of light ahead and sat down by the man, who was lying without movement except that of his labored breathing. Ted glanced up at the stars to see what their course was. He saw the Great Dipper down on its back near the horizon, and the two Guardians shining brightly above. Then he turned to the North Star, which stared back at him a minute, winked, wavered and went out.

The next thing Ted knew he started wide awake from a dream of playing with Tim. It was gray dawn. Surprised and mortified, he glanced at the man, who was quite still, whether unconscious from his hurt or quietly sleeping he could not tell; then at Van, who was fast asleep. Then he stole a glance at Barbara, expecting to meet her smile of

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comprehension and indulgence. But Barbara was leaning back against the wheel, unaware of his carelessness. She was asleep, too. Ted blamed himself for letting her get so tired, and started toward the wheel to relieve her. There was no sign of the city whose lights they had seen, and at the nearest telescope he stopped to look down.

For some minutes he knelt there, gazing intently. The fog was gone, and in that dim, gray, morning light he saw, perhaps a half mile below, the earth, just showing faintly green. So they were over the land. He turned the telescope and looked back along the way they had come. There were the quiet tops of trees that looked like lilac bushes, the roofs of houses. There was the needle-like spire that he seemed to recognize; the little, bright patch which must be the pond in the Old Green; and, farther still, the shining water of a little harbor and the broader stretch of a bay. It was Durston, there was no doubt, and they had passed very near it if not directly over it—asleep!

Just one more look before he woke Barbara and turned back. He found the Middletons' and could see patches of the driveway showing through the trees; and as he

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looked, something passed along that drive. He could not tell what it was, but he could follow its course as it crossed the bright patches, turned into King street and came after the airship. Then there was a clear strip of road and he saw what the thing was. It was a motor-car, easily recognized as Mr. Middleton's; and in it were three men. Ted had little doubt who they were. He turned to wake Barbara.

"Barbara," he said, gently. She opened her eyes and sat up with a start. "I hate to wake you," he went on, "but I have to. Where do you think we are? We have gone almost right over Durston and we must turn 'round. And Mr. Middleton's automobile is coming after us—at least I'm pretty sure it's his—and I guess that your father and my father are in it."

"Oh, Ted!" cried Barbara. She smiled and wiped her eyes. "I'm so glad! And just think, we don't know how we got here nor where we've been. Now I'm going to look."

As she left the wheel the engine stopped with a click. It had been running more and more slowly ever since Ted woke. Now they could not go back and must find a place to land.

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“Van!” cried Ted. “Wake up. The engine’s stopped and we’ve got to land. And we’re past Durston and your father’s coming after us in his automobile.”

Van, just waking, was bewildered by this rapid fire. “What? What?” he said, not at all realizing what he was to do.

“We’ve got to land,” Ted repeated, “if the engine won’t go. See what’s the matter with it.”

Van made his examination. “Liquid air’s all gone,” he announced, briskly. “Isn’t a drop left. Lucky that didn’t happen sooner.”

It was lucky, indeed. For an instant Ted wondered what they would have done if it had happened while they were out there over the ocean.

“The automobile’s gaining on us,” said Barbara. “Where shall we land, Ted?”

Van had no intention of being left out in that way. “There are lots of fields,” he said. “Land in any of ’em.”

“There are the Hanbury Fair Grounds,” Ted remarked. “They’re big and the road runs right into ’em, so your father’s car can get in, easy enough. And we’re almost there. It would jolt the man a good deal to

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take him out of the fields in the automobile." He nodded toward the quiet figure lying on the bottom of the car.

As the airship gradually descended the motor-car followed as closely as the roads would permit. Over the Fair Grounds they began to circle, descending very slowly. Barbara could recognize the people in the car by this time.

"It is, Ted," she said, "just what you thought. And they see what we're going to do and now they're going through the gate and getting out."

Slowly they circled lower and lower, nearer and nearer to those waiting people. Ted wondered, for a moment, at his father's face; but before they landed the expression, which he had never seen there before, was gone. In another minute the three men had seized the car and stopped it. Mr. Young and Mr. Middleton jumped in. Barbara was in her father's arms and Mr. Middleton, unable to speak, was shaking Van's hand violently. Van was not a demonstrative boy. Mr. Romaine did not speak until the airship was secured and the balloon emptied. His moment of affection and regret had passed.



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“Well, Edward,” he said then, impatiently, “you have given us a great fright. I have not slept a wink all night—nor even had my clothes off.”

Ted turned away from his father’s hand upon his shoulder, although the touch was not unkindly. But he felt weak and foolish, and there was a great lump in his throat.

The injured man was put into Mr. Middleton’s motor-car and Mr. Romaine, who knew nothing about running a car, went with him. There was no difficulty in borrowing another car, in which Mr. Young took Barbara and Van and Ted. It was the longest six miles that Ted had ever known.


At the Middletons he found his father.

“How is mother?” he asked, a little unsteadily. Perhaps she would not take his home-coming so calmly.

“I presume she is as well as usual, Edward,” answered Mr. Romaine, “although worry about you does not tend to make her any better.”

“I guess worry about me isn’t hurting her any,” Ted muttered, bitterly. But his father did not hear.

So it was his fault! Ted looked back.



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Mr. Middleton and Mr. Young were carrying the injured man into the house and Barbara and her mother were crying together. Almost choking, Ted ran across the fields, longing for somebody to cry over him.

## CHAPTER VI.

“Come, Ted,” Barbara cried, “let Jessica go faster. She wants to. Race with me.”

They were riding together, Ted on his own mare and Barbara on a horse Mr. Middleton had bought, immediately after their trip with the thunder-storm, especially for her to use.

“Father wouldn’t like it,” Ted answered. “He told me I mustn’t ride her hard.”

“Well,” said Barbara, “I wouldn’t propose doing what your father told you not to, Ted, even if I do think he isn’t fair. But it wouldn’t be riding her hard to let her go as fast as she wants to, would it? See, here’s a fine road, nice and level, and soft, and nobody in sight. And that nearest house is almost half a mile away.”

Barbara loosened her rein as she spoke and her horse started ahead. Then she gave a tantalizing backward glance at Ted. He loosened his rein, too, and Jessica needed no word. She sprang forward and the two



“ ‘Now I suppose we must walk them until they are all cooled off’ ”



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horses raced, neck and neck, along that smooth, soft road. Barbara's hair was flying straight out behind, her eyes were shining with the excitement of the race and with happiness at seeing that the gloomy look was leaving Ted's face. Poor Ted had a hard time to shake off the glumness that had become habitual with him, especially since their return in the airship on that memorable gray morning. And he did not guess how constantly Barbara was devoting herself to cheering him up.

When they had almost reached that nearest house, Ted pulled up. Jessica was not ready to stop and she danced and reared. But Ted soothed her and Barbara turned her horse and came cantering back to him.

"That was fine," she said. "Now, I s'pose we must walk them until they are all cooled off."

So the horses walked along that deserted country road, side by side; impatiently, at first, then more quietly. And when they reached the pine woods and turned in at a grass-grown lane Jessica and Flight were loitering along with lowered heads, sniffing at the tall grass. The lane faded insensibly to nothing and merged into the springy car-

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pet of brown needles, while, overhead, the wind whispered softly in the tree-tops. Presently there was the gleam of water ahead.

"There's Little River, Barbara," said Ted. "Let's sit down there."

Barbara was glad of the change. Ted jumped off Jessica and would have helped Barbara, but she was down before he could reach her. Ted tied the horses.

"Now," he said, "they can chew gum if they want to." He slumped down on the needles beside Barbara. "Do you know, Barbara, I think this beats airships all hollow. Now, don't you, honestly?"

"Well, yes," she assented, "on the whole. You wouldn't want to go up in an airship as often as you'd like to ride, would you? But you wouldn't miss going up again if you had the chance, would you, Ted? I wouldn't."

"N-no," Ted agreed, rather reluctantly, "I s'pose not. But I shouldn't want to go very often—not oftener than once a week."

That seemed to amuse Barbara. "No," she said, "not oftener than once a week. And when you did go, you'd rather do something more than just scoop around a field."

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"Yes," said Ted, "and I guess we will, next time. Probably Mr. Middleton was afraid to do more than that, after what we'd been through. But it was kind of tame."

"It was," said Barbara. "And what were you looking at there yesterday? What are they going to do to it?"

"To the airship? Why, Mr. Middleton put in a binnacle—with a compass, you know—and he's having the engine changed, so they can use gasoline if they want to. They can use liquid air, too. But I guess he was scared when he found we just got back, with all the liquid air used up. You see, you can't save it even when you don't use it."

"No," said Barbara. "And if he should stay away from his own place more than a day, how would he get back? He couldn't buy a gallon or two of liquid air, but he can buy gasoline."

"That's so."

"And do you know," Barbara went on, "that Mr. Middleton has asked me to name the airship? It hasn't any name yet. What would you name it, Ted?"

"Great benches, Barbara!" Ted exclaimed. "Don't ask me. I'm no good at



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thinking of names. Father says I haven't any imagination. Might name it 'Barbara.'

"Well, you see," she said, "I couldn't very well suggest that name—and I don't believe I want an airship named after me, anyway. It isn't like a boat or a real ship, somehow. Do you remember how we bounced up into the air when we tried to land?"

"Yes," answered Ted, "three or four times. I was afraid we weren't going to stay down. It was just the way a soap-bubble bounds. Oh, I'll tell you a name, Barbara."

Barbara looked greatly interested.

"'The Bounder,'" he said. "How would that be?"

"I don't know," said Barbara, a little doubtfully. "Perhaps Mr. Middleton wouldn't like it. Doesn't a bounder mean something that isn't nice? I had thought of 'The Petrel' or 'Storm-Wing' or something of that sort—or 'The Griffin' or 'Dragon-Fly.' It's awfully hard to find a good name."

"I think," said Ted, "that 'Dragon-Fly' is a good name. What is a griffin, Barbara?"

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"Why, Ted," she cried, laughing, "haven't you read your 'Alice'? It's something like a lion and something like an eagle, I guess. I don't know any more about it than that. But I think 'Dragon-Fly' is better than 'Griffin.' If you think of any better name, tell me."

Ted made no reply and for a long time they sat there, looking out over the water of Little River or watching the swirls and eddies near the shore. The look of gloom came back to Ted's face, and Barbara, glancing up, saw it.

"Ted," she said, softly, "I wish you'd seem happier. Don't you think there's a lot to make us happy in the world?"

"Oh, I s'pose so," he answered, rather gruffly, "but—I don't know—"

"Don't you like studying with Van?"

"Oh, yes."

"And isn't it easier? Won't you be able to make up?"

"I guess so. That doesn't worry me."

"Well, then, what does? You're just discouraged all the time."

Ted turned away and began digging in the needles.

"You know well enough, Barbara."

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Barbara did know well enough, and she sat for a minute silently gazing at Ted's back.

"What did your father say to you, Ted, when we got back? Wasn't he nice?"

"Oh, I s'pose he meant to be," Ted muttered, so low that Barbara could hardly hear. "But that's just the matter. He has to mean to be. He doesn't really care. I think he'd have been glad—really, in the end—if I hadn't come back at all. Sometimes I wish—I—hadn't."

Ted ought to have had some hay to hide in.

"Oh, Teddy, don't!" cried Barbara. "Don't say such a thing! Don't think it! Lots of people are fond of you and—and I think your father's a perfect beast!" she burst out, finally.

Ted sat up, quite calm again, and his jaw was set obstinately. "And besides that, Barbara," he went on, relentlessly, "I didn't see my mother for two days after that, and she didn't say anything in particular."

It was hard to know what to say to this. Ted did not seem to expect any reply and they sat looking out over the river. A fish-hawk was sailing slowly around, high above the water, his under-feathers gleaming daz-

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zling white in the sunlight when he wheeled. Barbara watched him until he blurred so that she could not tell which way he was going.

"I'm sorry, Teddy," she said, softly, "awfully sorry. I wish you had a father and a mother like mine."

As Ted turned to her two great drops splashed from her lashes into her lap.

"Oh, Barbara!" he cried, quickly. "I didn't mean to make you cry. It doesn't matter. And we'll be friends always, won't we, Barbara?"

"Always, Ted," Barbara answered, solemnly. Then she wiped her eyes and laughed. "And let's try to be happy, Ted. See that great hawk up there. I used to wonder how it would feel to sail around like that, miles high. Now I know."

"I s'pose," said Ted, "a hawk isn't ever afraid when he's sailing around—not the least bit afraid. I'm not—much—but it does make me feel a little bit queer—kind of a falling feeling. I haven't got over that yet."

"I haven't, either, quite," Barbara acknowledged. "Oh, there goes the hawk!"

The great hawk's keen eyes had seen some-

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thing in the water, far below him. He folded his wings and shot straight downward like a thunderbolt from the sky, struck, with a splash, and disappeared.

"My!" said Ted. "Isn't he coming up again? You don't suppose he's drowned—oh, there he is. He's got his fish, and it's a big one."

The big bird struggled out of the water, flapping heavily, and started off with his fish.

"Where's he going with it, Ted?" Barbara asked. The hawk was high now, industriously flying straight away.

"Going home, I s'pose. I don't know where they nest, but they've been around here every summer for as long as I can remember."

"I like to watch them," said Barbara. "They fly so fast and it looks so easy."

"Yes, that's so, but the eagles are better. You know there are three of 'em somewhere 'round—maybe more, but I've seen three at once. I was up above here on the shore under some trees, perfectly still, and all of a sudden the three eagles came over the tops of the trees, very low down. Then they saw me. They scattered, and I never saw any-

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thing go so fast. Really, I should think they went two miles in less than a minute, and they didn't seem to be half trying, either."

"I think they're very interesting," said Barbara. "There must be lots of other birds and animals here, too."

"I've caught mink and muskrat here," answered Ted, "and I think there's an otter, but I've never seen him, to be sure of it. And there's no end of birds. I wish you could hear a thrush now. Maybe it's too late for a hermit, but you might hear a Wilson's. There's one, now."

They listened to the distant whistle, which always made Ted think of a spiral, with its metallic, whirling sound.

"The hermit's song is the sweetest, I think," Ted said, "but it's sort of mournful."

"I know," Barbara answered. "I think it's lovely. I've heard it and it doesn't seem mournful to me. Don't you think it depends on how you feel whether a song sounds mournful or not? Now, you see, I feel very cheerful."

At that moment Jessica neighed impatiently.

"See," Barbara went on, "Jessica's get-

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ting tired of standing tied to a tree. I s'pose Flight is, too, but he doesn't make any fuss. Don't you think it is lovely of Mr. Middleton to let me ride that horse whenever I want to?"

"Well, yes," said Ted, "but I guess people like to be nice to you, Barbara. And you know you did a lot to help us get back safely that day. I guess Mr. Middleton would have been glad to give you the horse, only he thought you'd rather have him lend it to you."

"And so I would," answered Barbara. "What could I do with a horse, Ted? You know we haven't any barn—nor any man—and daddy couldn't afford to board him at the stable. So you think it was a kind of reward of merit, do you?"

"Yes, kind of."

Barbara laughed. "Well, it's a good kind. I wish they gave that kind at school. But why didn't you get a reward, too, Ted?"

"Why, I do. You see, I had a horse, but they do other things for me. There's Mr. Nash, now. I don't believe father 'll have to pay anything at all."

"Well," Barbara observed, "Mr. Middle-

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ton can afford to do anything he wants to. And how does Van get along?"

"All right, I guess," Ted answered. "Van's all right, but you know, Barbara, he's sort of queer. I wish he didn't like to show off what he knows, so much. It makes me tired, sometimes."

"If he only could see the funny side of things! But he's really kind. Now the horses are both stamping at a great rate and I s'pose we'd better go. I hate to, but I guess we'd better."

As they reluctantly left that beautiful place, Ted felt a sense of greater comfort and peace than he had known for a long time. Friends with Barbara for "always!" That was worth while.

The impatient horses were let out again on the soft road. When, at last, they were content to walk a little, Barbara asked for news of the injured man.

"He's queer," Ted answered. "I saw him yesterday. It's only three weeks since he was hurt, but he was out in the shed, looking at the airship. He looked perfectly well and he acted all right, but you know he can't remember anything about himself. He doesn't know his name nor where he came



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from nor why he is here. But he remembers about being hurt and I think he remembers something about the man that did it. But he didn't talk to me. He seems to know a lot about airships. He asked Mr. Middleton a whole lot of questions and he told him some things he didn't know before—Mr. Middleton didn't, I mean. Mr. Middleton is going to take him up. He told my father he thought Roe could give him some points. Why do they call him Roe, Barbara?"

"I don't know, exactly," said Barbara, "but I heard daddy and Mr. Middleton talking about his name. They had to call him something. Mr. Middleton was going to call him John Doe, but daddy said he thought poor Doe was overworked and they ought to make Richard Roe do his share. So that's what they call him. When is he going up, Ted?"

"To-morrow, I guess, or the day after. Anyway, when you come up there to-morrow, you see. I'd rather like to go up with 'em."

They were cantering along King street, and everybody they met had a smile for Barbara. Presently she pulled Flight to a

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walk. "Oh, Ted," she said, "I knew there was something I wanted to tell you and I've just remembered what it is. You mustn't tell anybody. Promise!"

"I promise. Criss-cross—hope I—"

"No, don't say that. But daddy said it was a government secret. It can't be very much of a secret, or he wouldn't have said anything about it—and it was in some paper. But there's some smuggling—"

"Smuggling!" cried Ted, eagerly. "Where?"

"Some things that they think are brought over in some of the ocean steamers—from France, I s'pose—and they think the things get in somewhere around here. Daddy's the collector and he ought to collect the duties on such things that come in, in his district. So it worries him."

"My!" said Ted. "Just think! Smuggling in Durston! Wouldn't you like to find out about it, Barbara?"

"Yes," she answered, mysteriously, "and maybe we will. Do you remember, Ted, the launch we saw—and the bundle with the little blue light?"

Ted stared at Barbara. "Do you believe that was it?"

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"I don't know," Barbara replied. "But it might be. And it was queer, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was. I wonder what they smuggle."

Barbara made no reply. Ted was silent and thoughtful, but his eyes were sparkling. The rein lay loose on Jessica's neck and the two horses walked slowly down King street.

"We're almost home, Ted," said Barbara, presently. "I hate to have to go in."

Ted woke up suddenly. "So do I," he said. "Let's not. Come on down to the shore."

Barbara was willing and they cantered down the street. As they went a dog wandered down to the Romaine gate, stood a moment and looked curiously up and down the street, sniffing. The next instant he was a black streak along the road.

"Why, here's Tim," said Barbara. "Why didn't you take him all the way with us, Ted?"

"I don't take him to the woods," said Ted, quietly. "He scares all the birds away and I don't hear a note. He doesn't mean to, of course, but he ranges around and the birds keep away."

Ted had his unexpected aspects, even to

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Barbara. "But you shoot with him, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. And he's a very good dog to shoot over. But sometimes I like to just see and hear what goes on in the woods. Now, here we are, Barbara. Can you take the fence, or shall I open the gate for you?"

"I don't know whether Flight can take the fence or not," she answered, "but I'll find out."

As she finished she touched the horse lightly and spoke to him. He pricked up his ears and looked at the fence, but did not change his easy lope. It was not a high fence, but Ted was amazed to see Flight take it without a change in his gait, as though it were no more than a moderate-sized log. Jessica went over it flying, with a foot to spare.

"My!" said Ted. "I guess he's an old hand at jumping. He didn't seem to think that was any excitement at all. I can't hold Jessica down. She gets excited and goes at it as though it was six feet high."

Barbara was flushed and smiling. "Oh, but she's lovely, Ted. I think she's like a young girl—something—not used to things enough to think they don't matter. She's

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interested. But I do think Flight's fine. Isn't Mr. Middleton good?"

Ted nodded. "Now we might have a little run to the bank, but be careful not to go over."

At the edge of the bluff the horses stood for some time, and Ted stared out over the bay and at every little stretch of shore, every little cove.

"What is it, Ted?" asked Barbara, smiling. "Looking for smugglers?"

Ted flushed a little and laughed. "I didn't expect to see any. But I was wondering where they can land—if they really come here."

"I'll tell you where they land," said Barbara, carelessly. "It's right at the wharf, where everybody can see them. That's what I think, but don't ask me why, for I couldn't tell."

Ted turned and stared at her in astonishment. "What do you mean, Barbara? Do you think you know who it is?"

"I don't even know that there is anything of the kind," Barbara answered. "But if it is true—if there is, why—I've got an idea. But I can't tell you what it is, Ted, so don't ask. It's probably all wrong."

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"Well—" said Ted. He hesitated. "I think you might, Barbara."


"If it was anything I was the least sure of, I would, Ted," she said, quickly. "But it isn't, and I may be quite wrong. So don't ask."

Ted knew very well that he had to be content with that, so he did not urge. And presently Barbara sighed and turned Flight. And the two horses cantered back again over the grass and Flight went cantering over the fence as though it were too small a matter to be of any real interest to him, while Jessica went a foot higher than she needed to. It was a very short way to the Middletons', and Barbara waved her hand to Ted as she turned in at the gate.

"'Tis the fine marnin' ye've had f'r a ride, Masther Ted," said Pat, as Ted slipped off Jessica's back. "An' I'm hopin' Miss Barb'ra's well. Shure, she might let an old man see her bright face now an' thin."

Ted nodded. Somehow, he did not feel like talking about Barbara.

"An' hark t' me, Masther Ted," Pat continued, confidentially. "'Twas on'y th' marnin' y'r father says t' me, says he, 'Pat, do Edward be shlidin' down thim Graycian



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colyumns now, do he?' An' I says t' him, says I, 'Shure, sor, an' I dunno, bliss th' b'y.' An' wid that he wint off. But mind ye, Mather Ted, he's got an eye t' ye, he has."

## CHAPTER VII.

Strangely enough, Barbara and Ted happened to stroll up to the Middletons' airship shed about the same time the next morning. Van was bustling about, apparently very busy.

"Hello, Van," Ted called. "What you doing?"

"Helping father." Van had just hurried out at the door of the shed, and having delivered his brief answer he hurried in again. Ted wondered what he had come out for. Barbara's eyes were twinkling.

"What do you suppose he's in such a hurry for, Ted?" she asked.

"I was wondering," said Ted, smiling back at her. "Let's see if we can find his father."

They entered the shed and at the sound of their voices Mr. Middleton's head rose above the gunwale of the car.

"Well, Barbara," he cried, cheerily, "ready for another ride this beautiful morning? Where's your habit?"



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“Oh,” said Barbara. She had thought, at first, that he meant a ride in the airship. “Oh—I—well, maybe I’ll ride a little later. I thought I’d like to see what you were doing to the airship.”

“Very natural—very natural curiosity,” said Mr. Middleton. “You have a—er—personal interest in the ship now, eh, Barbara? And what’s her name to be?”

“I don’t know,” Barbara answered. “It’s hard to find a good name. The best I can think of is ‘Dragon-Fly.’ Do you like that kind of a name?”

“Why, yes, I think that’s a very good name. Van suggested ‘The Parrot.’ But it doesn’t look anything like a parrot. We’ll call it the ‘Dragon-Fly,’ informally, until we are sure we can’t think of something better. So you want to know what we’ve been doing to it, do you?”

Barbara nodded.

“Well, just look in here,” he continued, “and I’ll show you.”

“I guess I’m pretty familiar with the looks of the inside,” Barbara observed.

Mr. Middleton laughed. “Probably you are. Well, I didn’t like to think what might have happened because you had no compass

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and because the liquid air gave out. It was just a piece of wonderful luck that made it last as long as it did. And it was my own carelessness that left you without a compass. I had just gone to get it, you know. So we've made a few changes."

"Yes," Van broke in. "Can't forget the compass now, and if we run out of fuel we can get more anywhere. We were just thinking of going up to try the gasoline engine. And then there's a new scheme. We can run both engines, and the waste heat from the gasoline is used in the air engine."

Mr. Middleton looked really excited as Van made this announcement.

"It's a little idea of my own," he said—

"And a very interesting one," said a new voice at the door.

They all turned quickly and in the doorway they saw the injured man standing. He looked perfectly well and normal; a young man, still a little pale from his hurt and his confinement, but rather handsome as he stood there, smiling at them.

"Ah, Roe," cried Mr. Middleton, "glad to see you. Come in."

Mr. Roe came in and greeted Barbara and Ted pleasantly, quite self-possessed.

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"You know, of course," he said to Barbara, "that Roe is not my real name. But it does very well until I can remember who I am. Really, a strange case, you know, Miss Barbara, and it interests me. I've a sort of a notion that I've always been interested in strange cases, although I don't at all know why. I may have come across others as strange, but I can't remember any yet."

Barbara hardly knew what reply to make to this curious speech, so she only smiled at him. Mr. Roe seemed to like her smile—and it would have been stranger yet if he had not.

"Mr. Middleton has half promised to take me up in the—what did you name it?—oh, the 'Dragon-Fly'—a very appropriate name. I don't know just what a dragon-fly is, but it impresses me as an appropriate name. I fancy I have known dragon-flies, but I can't remember."

"Why, yes," said Barbara, eagerly. "I'm sure you do—darning-needles, we used to call them—devil's darning-needles."

"Yes, yes, to be sure," he answered, quickly. "And that's a fine name. Why not call it that? But they don't really sew up the children's lips, do they?"

Barbara laughed. "No," she said, "I

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guess not. At least, I never heard of its happening. I don't know how Mr. Middleton would like that name."

"I'll ask him. And then, if I don't insist upon it, perhaps he will give me the other half of his promise."

He was very quick, this good-looking young man with the broken head. He was almost too quick. He stood beside Mr. Middleton, talking with much animation. Barbara found herself wondering, as she watched him, whether his head was badly hurt; whether he really had a broken head at all, to be as well as that in three weeks. Some such thought was passing through Ted's mind. He did not like the fellow, he knew that; but he did not know why. In spite of his feeling, he could not keep down an impulse of admiration. The man was rather slender, of moderate height, but there was that in his walk, in the very way he stood as he talked, that suggested the athlete—strength and a perfect command of it. Ted would not have been surprised to see Mr. Roe, in blue tights, performing upon the highest trapeze in the tent or turning double somersaults over six elephants. But he did not like him.

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Mr. Middleton seemed to find Roe agreeable. He was laughing at his suggestion, and although he did not quite approve the name, he readily gave the other half of his promise to take him up in the airship. And then Roe proceeded to ask questions about the airship; questions which showed a rather remarkable familiarity with such matters, and particularly with gasoline engines.

The day was beautiful, with a light south-westerly wind which bade fair to increase toward afternoon, but this wind could not blow them out to sea, however strong it might become. The most it could do was to blow them up the coast, and Mr. Middleton had no fear that they might not be able to land whenever they wished.

The load of five people was about as much as the airship could carry; but, with the balloon inflated to nearly its full size, the engine drove them up easily. Then, at the height of a few hundred feet, they circled about over Durston.

“Where shall we go, Barbara?” asked Mr. Middleton. “I will leave it to you—that is, subject to my veto in case your choice does not seem to be safe.”

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Barbara looked out over the wide expanse of country which was spread out before her. She could see nothing of Durston or the harbor, directly under them, but she saw Little River, the winding country roads, freshly cropped hay-fields with their tiny stacks of hay dotted over them. The fields looked surprisingly small and the stone walls might have been built for dolls. And there was Hanbury—she had no idea it was so near as that—and, far away in the distance, beyond many other fields and patches of woods and shining bends of the river, with the winding white roads all seeming to stagger towards it, was a city of some size, overhung by a haze of brown smoke. Then, as the Dragon-Fly turned in its slow circle, she saw long stretches of green, salt marsh; and showing upon it, here and there, as bright patches, were the pools and creeks filled by the high tide. And there was the long, white beach, curving gently to the headland, and the toy waves breaking upon it. And beyond the headland was a thin strip of green with its bushy-looking trees, and beyond that the broad ocean. She gazed out long at this before replying to Mr. Middleton's question.

“I s'pose if I said I'd like to go out over

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that ocean, you'd have to veto it," she said at last. "Well, I won't say so. But first I'll look down at Durston and the harbor."

She stooped to the nearest telescope. "Why," she said, "we're right over the custom house. I ought to be able to look down through and see daddy sitting at his desk. And there are some boys running up from the wharf. There's Dick Creamer, I guess, but I can't tell, of course, because I'm not familiar with his looks from the top. And now I see the harbor and—why, Ted, there's the Fishing Club launch going down the harbor. It's just passing Breakwater Island now, going out."

She left the telescope, seeming to have forgotten about her choice.

"I'd just like to know something," she said, "and I wish you'd tell me, Mr. Middleton."

"If I can," he replied, smiling at her earnestness. "What is it?"

"Why," she said, smiling back at him, "nothing much. But seeing that launch made me wonder. Who's in the Fishing Club?"

"In the Fishing Club?" repeated Mr. Middleton, reflectively. "That ought to be

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easy. There's Creamer and Stanchion and— and— Well, upon my word, Barbara, I can't think of any more. I should have said there were a lot, but I guess that's all. I believe there's a New York man in it, but I don't know his name."

Mr. Richard Roe caught the look in Barbara's eyes while she was listening to this reply and it seemed to make him thoughtful. Barbara's eyes were worth looking at then and he kept on looking at them. And it must have been something in Mr. Middleton's reply that made Ted sulky.

"Why, isn't that queer?" Barbara cried, when Mr. Middleton stopped. "I should think it would take more than three men to make a club, shouldn't you? Is it Stanchion, the jeweler?"

Mr. Middleton nodded.

"And where do they fish? Why do they need a launch?"

"Did you ever hear of Bleak Island? I don't suppose you have ever seen it, for nobody goes there. Well, they lease that island, and it is so far out to sea that they need a pretty good boat to get to it. And they fish for bass—great big fish, Barbara,



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weighing anywhere from fifty to two hundred pounds apiece."

"Gracious!" cried Barbara. "What do they look like—the bass, I mean? What do they do with the fish they catch?"

Mr. Middleton seemed amused. "Well," he said, "I know what a bass looks like, but I don't remember that I ever saw any they had caught, and I don't know what they do with them. Probably they have them mounted on a board and hang them up in their dining-rooms."

"And who runs the launch?" Barbara pursued. "They must have an engineer, I should think—somebody to take care of the boat."

Mr. Middleton laughed outright at Barbara's persistence. "I rather think not. I don't know either of them very well, but I heard Creamer say once that they didn't want to bother with a man. They run the launch themselves."

"Oh," said Barbara. "Well, I think they're funny, anyway. But I don't know where to say to go, Mr. Middleton. I'd rather not choose. Any way will be pleasant."

"Well, then," he returned, "we might run

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over to call on Eastman. I would rather like to return his call in the 'Dragon-Fly.' It's farther than I had expected to go, but I guess we can do it, all right."

Mr. Roe had been gazing out over the country, just as Barbara had, and he had seemed much interested and pleased with the idea of the telescopes. At the mention of Mr. Eastman's name Barbara, who chanced, at the moment, to be looking at Roe, thought she detected a little movement of surprise. It was gone so quickly that she thought she must have been mistaken.

"May I ask," said Roe, "who is this Mr. Eastman? Some friend of yours, I suppose, Mr. Middleton?"

"Yes, a friend of mine," Mr. Middleton replied, "who is also interested in airships. He called on me one day in his."

"Perhaps," Mr. Roe went on, with, as Barbara thought, a quiet purpose behind his words, "—perhaps he, too, has thought it a beautiful day to make a flight."

"That's very true, Roe," said Mr. Middleton, "very likely, indeed. On the whole, we might—we probably should fail to find him. And the trip itself is not the most entertaining that we might take. It would take us

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about ten miles beyond that city you see to the northwest, under the smoke—Scovill—manufacturing town, you know, not pleasant. We might coast along the shore to the southwest. It's very pretty that way, if you care for that kind of landscape."

"For my part," said Mr. Roe, "I find that I am very fond of the salt water. Miss Barbara tells me that I can swim well. I rather thought I could, but I was not sure."

So they turned and coasted along the shore, slowly, Roe seeming much interested in the view, although most of his attention was directed to the seaward side. Van was bustling about the machinery, doing nothing in particular and, no doubt, doing that very well. Ted was not happy. He tried hard to be, for he remembered his promise to Barbara; and he could not have told what it was that made him so discontented. But the best he could do was to gaze out moodily and see nothing.

Barbara sat for some time watching the familiar places drift under them, conscious only of a great content. Then her gaze wandered to Roe and, absently, she watched him, interested in his interest, thinking that he was strange and that she did not under-

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stand him. Still she watched him as he got Van to show him about the telescopes. And she could not help thinking that he seemed very eager about something, although he evidently did not wish his eagerness to appear. It was impossible to tell, from within the car, the direction of the telescope. Roe seemed to be looking all about, and it was only by the little movement of concentration—an almost imperceptible movement—that she felt convinced that he had found something he had been looking for.

Barbara would not go to the other telescope—she did not want Mr. Roe to feel that he was being watched—but she looked about as well as she could from her seat. At last she saw it, scarcely more than a speck in the water, almost abreast of them—"abeam," Van might have said, for Van was very nautical in his expressions.

"Mr. Roe," she said. He looked up with a start. "I didn't mean to interrupt you, but I was wondering if you could see the launch."

"The launch?" he asked, as though puzzled. "Oh, you mean the little launch we saw starting out, that you said belonged to

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the Fishing Club? Why, that must be somewhere about."

He looked through the telescope again and turned it about a little. "There it is. It seems to be a pretty comfortable boat for a motor-boat. It is what you call a motor-boat, isn't it?"

He looked up at Mr. Middleton, who nodded.

"It is curious," resumed Mr. Roe, "that I should know about such things, but I have the impression that they are familiar to me. Now I believe that I could run this 'Dragon-Fly' and navigate it—or that motor-boat. As I was saying, it seems a pretty comfortable motor-boat—and looks fast, too. There's a good cabin, the engines are enclosed, and—well, in fact, it looks able and seaworthy—as though it might live and give a good account of itself even in an ocean cruise. I cannot tell how many men are on her, but I see only two."

This account was very interesting to Barbara, and she thought the Fishing Club launch seemed to interest Mr. Roe rather more than was to have been expected. They watched it until they parted company, the launch—or motor-boat, as Roe had called



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it—leaving the bay and heading out to sea in the general direction of Bleak Island, while the 'Dragon-Fly' followed the shore line to the westward.

They ran along in this way for an hour or more, Van still bustling about the machinery, which needed no attention, or adjusting the wings now and then to keep their height. Ted still gazed out moodily at nothing, feeling generally unhappy. Roe was interested in the telescope and what it showed him, and Mr. Middleton was steering. Barbara thought Mr. Roe ought to know by heart those shores and the water near them, for he appeared to be examining every foot of them. At last he had had enough. He looked up and suggested to Mr. Middleton that it was a good chance to try the two engines together, using the waste heat from the gasoline in the air engine.

"That new idea of yours, you know. I believe I could arrange that for you, temporarily. It seems to me that I know how."

Mr. Middleton was delighted; and after a quarter of an hour's tinkering Roe announced that it was done.

"You can start up the liquid air whenever

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you are ready," he said. "I think I'd rather you did that."

"Then you can steer," Mr. Middleton replied. "I have no doubt you will do it as well as you do everything else about the ship."

Roe undertook this task with some alacrity, and Barbara, glancing up as the two men changed places, saw something far off in the sky that made her exclaim.

"Oh," she cried, "look! I believe that's another airship."

Everybody looked where she pointed.

"I guess," Mr. Middleton remarked, "it must be Eastman. We'll just run down and speak to him and then put back for home."

Roe had settled down at the wheel, and Barbara was astonished to see how he seemed to have shrunk into the car. It was hardly possible to see more than his cap over the deck and it would have been quite impossible to recognize him. Both engines were going by this time and the 'Dragon-Fly' was driving along at great speed.

Evidently they had been seen from the other airship, which had changed her course to meet them. It was a matter of only a few minutes to cover the six or eight miles

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that separated them. Barbara felt sure that Roe would have preferred any other direction to the one he could not avoid taking, although he made no comment. But it was plain enough that he did not intend that the two airships should get very near to each other.

"I want to talk to Eastman," Mr. Middleton called. "Can't you go a little nearer, Roe?"

"Really, Mr. Middleton," Roe replied, "it is my conviction that it is not safe to approach the airships any more closely. They are not so easily manageable—at least, we are not yet sure that they can be manoeuvred with the necessary precision at close quarters. By use of the megaphone you may talk with ease as we circle, at this distance."

Mr. Middleton assented, although he did not seem entirely satisfied. Mr. Eastman perceived the intention and the two airships began to circle about each other, perhaps a hundred yards apart.

"Barbara," Ted called to her, softly, "aren't you afraid we'll get dizzy, going 'round and 'round, this way? But Roe"—this was in a whisper—"seems to know how



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to do it, all right. Still, it isn't very hard to do."


Barbara nodded and looked at Roe again. He had leaned back so that he was entirely invisible from outside the car. Mr. Middleton, after the first greetings, was telling of the changes he had made. Mr. Eastman, greatly interested, would have come nearer to see the engines; but as he approached the "Dragon-Fly" suddenly sheered off.

"Sorry, Eastman," Mr. Middleton called, when they were once more revolving in their orbits, "but we're a little erratic at times and we have to be careful."

"Yes," yelled Mr. Eastman, "I'll try to—"

Apparently he was about to make an appointment; but again they sheered off out of easy hearing.

To Ted this seemed only a gratifying evidence of Roe's inability to steer. But Barbara thought it very curious until she saw that Roe was listening eagerly and that they sheered off for the third time when Mr. Middleton was just beginning to tell of their adventure in the thunder-storm, pointing to Roe, who was huddled up at the wheel,



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entirely concealed from the view of Mr. Eastman.

This time it seemed to be quite impossible to get the airships together again. The "Dragon-Fly" shot away for a long distance in a straight line in spite of Roe's apparent attempts to turn it. Then it suddenly began to circle, a long way from the other airship. And when they were finally straightened out again and headed right, a shifting of the weight in the car, without compensating adjustment of the wings, tilted them and sent them soaring far above Mr. Eastman. Neither Barbara nor Ted was ever able to make out how this happened. Barbara thought that Van moved from his place toward the wheel, but she was looking out and if he did he was back again before she saw him, and he always stoutly denied it. So they kept on, waving a farewell to Mr. Eastman, and he was soon left far behind.

The run back to the bay was uneventful, and after one of the engines had been stopped Barbara was almost dozing in the shadow of the balloon when she was startled by a cry from Ted.

"What was that, Barbara?" he said. "Listen."

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There it was, a most mysterious thing, the crying of a child. Barbara did not believe in ghosts, but she felt nervous shivers run up and down her back.

"Good gracious, Ted," she cried, "what can it be? How can we hear a child crying, 'way up here in the air?"

Ted was staring about. "Maybe it's some bird," he ventured. "But I don't see any."

"It can't be a bird," Barbara insisted. "It's plain enough. I guess I know the sound of a child's crying."

Ted started toward the nearest telescope.

"It's quite simple," observed Mr. Roe, calmly. He was smiling. "You know sound rises with a marvelous clearness, especially on such a day as this. I do not doubt that Ted will see the child below us."

By this time everybody in the car was interested and looking for the child, Ted at one telescope and Mr. Middleton at the other, while Van and Roe stuck to their posts. They still heard the crying, the low, monotonous, discouraged cry of a child who had given up hope.

"Great benches!" cried Ted. "I see it. It's almost under us—a little boy in an old punt, and the punt's half full of water."



" Van reached out and seized him by the collar of his blouse "



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“I see him, too,” said Mr. Middleton. “I didn’t realize that we were so far off shore. Send us down gently, Van. And, Roe, he’s right under us—the least bit astern now.”

Roe needed no further directions than an occasional word from Mr. Middleton or Ted, and within two or three minutes he could see for himself. The “Dragon-Fly” settled down gently beside the old punt, which was nearly full of water. The boy was sitting in water up to his waist, leaning against the thwart, his face buried on his arms, and he kept up his low, despairing crying. He had not seen the airship at all; and when the car settled down upon the water beside him the slight noise roused him. He turned a startled, pathetic little face up to them and saw the great monster towering high, with a smaller monster—Van had on his airship suit—leaning toward him. He gave one wild shriek and made a terrified jump for the opposite side of the punt. But the water in which he was sitting impeded his movements and Van reached out and seized him by the collar of his blouse before he could get away.

The “Dragon-Fly” had not lost headway completely, and she slowly forged ahead of

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the punt, the balloon, acting as a great sail, drifting them apart at the same time. The boy was too badly frightened to shriek as his legs dragged over the side of the punt and Van did his best to pull him in. But Van's strength was not equal to the task. He was bending far out over the side, holding desperately to the little blouse and very nearly going overboard himself. Then, making one last effort, he lost his balance. Instinctively, he dropped the boy to seize the rail. The poor little chap soused back into the water with a melancholy splash.

"Oh!" cried Barbara. And Ted started for the rail.

At that instant they were all startled by another splash. With incredible quickness Roe had dropped his coat and shoes, and there he was in the water, diving after the sinking child. As she looked, Barbara felt the airship leave the water with a jerk, and the bare surface of the bay dropped away rapidly.

"Quick, Ted!" she cried. "You steer—you're nearest—and we'll start the pump and the engine."

It was no great matter to get down again to their place on the water. Roe was wait-



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ing for them, smiling calmly and holding the boy high.

“He’s all right,” he said, “—only frightened.”

And as the car struck the water that remarkable young invalid swung himself over the side with the boy in his arms. Ted admired him at that moment, and hated him more thoroughly than he had ever admired or hated anybody in his life before.

The look of fright and horror was still in the poor child’s face as he lay in Barbara’s lap and saw the great balléon above him, like a living thing. But as she gently took off his wet clothes and dried him and rubbed him softly until the deadly chill was gone, the nervous catch in his breath smoothed out. He looked up into Barbara’s face and smiled, and then he spoke for the first time.

“That was an awfu’ howwid pwace,” he said, with a long sigh, “but I like this.”

“Yes, you little dear,” cried Barbara, bending down to kiss him, “I hope you do. We’re going to take care of you and take you home. What’s your name, lamb?”

Barbara was used to children and the boy knew that well enough. So he smiled up at her, seraphically.



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"Name is Bev'y A'ston Lee," he said sweetly, "an' I'm are a'most four old. What's that great thing?"

He pointed up at the balloon.

"That's a balloon, dearie."

Beverly Alston Lee sat up. "Oh, is it? I thought it was a ammul."

"I don't wonder, you poor tot," said Barbara, drawing him closer to her. "And now, Beverly Alston Lee, tell Barbara where you live and how you came to be floating around in that old boat."

"Live at Richmon'!" answered Beverly, calmly.

"Live at Richmond!" echoed Barbara, astonished.

"Yes," Beverly insisted. "Live at Richmon' sometimes. Sometimes live at little house by side that big water."

"Oh!" said Barbara.

"Yes. And Martha went to sleep an' I was pwayin' ship in that boat by Cam Billy's an' then the water came in an' I looked an' I was 'way out an' I couldn't get back. It was awfu' howwid. An'—an' I cwied. An' then you came."

"And now you're all right. So you live near Cap'n Billy's, do you?"

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"Yes. An' my mother live there, too."

"I should hope so," Barbara exclaimed.  
"And doesn't your daddy live there, too?"

"No. My daddy's gone away, long time ago, an' now he's gone far away to heaven. I an' mother's goin' to heaven some day, to see my dee daddy," he added, cheerfully.

"Not yet awhile, sweet," said Barbara, kissing him and pulling the wrap closer about him. It made her shudder to think how near he had come to it.

"No, not yet, but some day. But what's that?"

Barbara looked up. To her great surprise they were just landing, and what the youngster saw was the big airship shed.

"Why," she said, "we're home again, Beverly. And when we've had some luncheon, I'm going to take you back to your mother."

"In the bayoon?" asked Beverly.

"No, dear, in a carriage."

"O-oo! An' will you let I dwive?"

"Maybe," answered Barbara, smiling.  
"We'll see."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Beverly Alston Lee had "bwead an' sywup" for his luncheon—against Barbara's judgment, but in accordance with his earnest wish—and smeared himself to his heart's content. Then, when she had removed the outward signs of this feast, Barbara tucked him in on the seat between herself and Ted. All the four miles to Little River, Beverly was interested in everything he saw; and when there were no electric cars, no children, no cows, nothing but the bare, closely cropped fields, he was quite satisfied to watch the horse, bobbing up and down before him. Then they went up over the arch of High Bridge, and with the long country road before them, the boy's little hands were laid upon the reins in front of Ted's and their progress was merrier yet.

On they drove, the bay always at their left, sometimes close beside them, sometimes a quarter of a mile away; and at a lane a little beyond the mysterious road that led

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to Cap'n Billy's, Barbara told Ted to turn toward the shore. They turned and twisted through a thin wood of oaks and birches, bumping high over the big stones in the ruts, to the great joy of Beverly. Then, suddenly, they emerged and there again was the bay before them. Between the water and the wood lay a narrow strip of land covered with dry, wiry grass, and half-way down the gentle slope stood three small cottages.

"Mother! Mother!" cried Beverly's shrill little voice.

A slender figure, hurrying from one of the tiny cottages, stopped, looked, and came running toward them. And Beverly stretched his arms to her and she lifted him down and held him close.

"Oh, my dear little boy," she cried, when she had kissed him enough, "where have you been all this time? Mother was getting very anxious. Weren't you at Captain Billy's with Martha?"

"Yes, mother. But Martha went to sleep an' I pwayed in a boat an' the boat sailed away an' the water came in an' I went up in a bayoon. An' I had bwead an' sywup an' I dwove the horse."

"Beverly, dear!" cried his mother, laugh-

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ing. "What a story to make up! I beg your pardon," she said, looking up at Barbara, who was smiling happily; "I was so worried about Beverly and so relieved to get him again that I forgot everybody else. I—"

"Oh, don't bother to thank us, Mrs. Lee," Barbara cried. "I'm so thankful—for you know Beverly's story is all true, and it's only a little more than two hours since it all happened. You must have seen the airship stop."

"I'm afraid I didn't," Mrs. Lee answered. "I must have been in the house. But won't you come down?"

Barbara thought she couldn't. "But I'll come down to-morrow if I may," she said. "I'd love to. And Ted and I might ride down here as well as not. I'm Barbara Young and—"

"Oh!" yelled Beverly. "There's Martha, an' she's all sopping. An' there's Cam Billy coming, too."

He waited only long enough to call to Barbara. "You coming to pway with me?" he cried. And at her nod he darted off.

"Do come," said Mrs. Lee. "I shall be delighted to see you both, and so will Bev-

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erly. Now, I suppose I must see to Martha. I ought to scold her or send her away, but she always feels so heartbroken that I can't do it."

With a little smile of farewell she turned and ran after Beverly. Barbara watched her.

"Look, Ted," she said. "She's just like a girl. She doesn't seem a bit older than I, does she? Don't you think she's pretty and nice? And now I s'pose she'll just go and comfort that old Martha who almost let Beverly drown. But doesn't Martha look disconsolate?"

Martha certainly did look disconsolate. She was soaking wet up to her knees, and her skirts were draggled with sand and mud and torn by the briars and thorns she had run through in her remorseful search for Beverly. The tears still streamed down her face, although she stopped her wailing at sight of the boy. A few steps behind her stumped Cap'n Billy.

"Let's go, Ted," said Barbara. "Maybe Martha 'll be through her weeping by tomorrow. And I want to get back to Durs-ton in time to do some errands."

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Ted was very silent on the way home. As they drove over High Bridge Barbara determined to find out what was the matter with him.

"Now, Ted," she said, turning and facing him, "you have to tell me what is wrong. You have to tell me, so you might as well do it at once."

Ted flicked the horse with the whip.

"Nothing in particular the matter," he growled.

The horse, surprised at the touch of the whip, had bounded forward.

"You'll break my back if you do that again," said Barbara. "And it isn't any use to say there's nothing the matter. You're as cross as two sticks. So, out with it, Teddy."

Ted smiled, sorely against his will. "Well, Barbara," he said, "If you'll promise never to tell. I don't like that Roe."

Barbara laughed. "Teddy Romaine!" she cried. "What a thing to be cross about! But why don't you like him? I think he's wonderful. He can do so many things, and he does them so easily and so well. Now, doesn't he?"

"Oh, yes," Ted acknowledged, grudgingly,

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"I s'pose so. But I don't like him, and I just wish you didn't."

The faint flicker of a smile made Barbara's mouth twitch. "I don't, especially," she said. "But I don't dislike him. He's rather queer and I can't make out, quite— But I think he's nice. Just let's wait till we know him better. And you mustn't be cross with me, Ted."

So Ted did his best, and they got along very well until they reached Creamer's. There Barbara wanted to stop.

"You leave me here," Ted," she said, "and take the horse home. I have some shopping to do. It's only a little piece of lace that I want, but it may take me some time to find it."

And as Ted turned the horse to drive up the hill to the Middletons, there was the detested Roe, hurrying to catch Barbara. Ted gave the horse a savage cut and the astonished animal whirled him away in a cloud of dust. Ted did not pretend to have a sweet temper.

Roe gazed after the retreating dust cloud, a little puzzled. Barbara was looking, too, but she was not puzzled. She really wished that Mr. Roe had not happened to see her just then.



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"Well!" said Roe, when the cloud had turned the corner. "Our friend Ted seems a little put out about something—or has the horse been behaving badly?"

"Oh, no," Barbara answered. "The horse is all right, but Ted has to bear a good many trying things. And he has a temper."

"And quite right," said Roe. "A boy without a temper is like bread without yeast. Were you going in here, Miss Barbara?"

"Just for a little errand, Mr. Roe," Barbara replied, hoping that he would not propose going with her.

"I was just going in here myself," Roe observed. "I have a little errand—nothing less than shopping without buying anything. I have some curiosity about a little matter. I have an impression that I am interested in lace—that I know something about it—and I wish to look some over. It might make me remember, you know. But of course I can't buy any."

"Now, it's strange," said Barbara, "that I was going in to look at lace. I want a little piece. And if you would give me your advice it would be a great help."

Mr. Roe was most happy to do that, and they went in together. Luckily, Ted did not

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see them then, nor later, as they sat at the lace counter, looking over Mr. Creamer's stock. Barbara was particular—fussy, no doubt the girl thought, as she got piece after piece. But Roe was even harder to please than Barbara. And the girl behind the counter became interested at last, hearing the strange man's comments on the pieces she was showing him. Evidently he knew something of lace. She would show him the best they had. And she found them—in the office safe—only a few small pieces of old Alencon and Argentan and one large piece of Valenciennes. And Mr. Roe praised them and explained to Barbara how each kind was made, and the lace girl listened eagerly. But Roe could not use such pieces. Barbara had forgotten her share in this errand, completely.

“I think,” said the lace girl then, “that we may have some more soon. I heard Mr. Creamer say something about it last week.”

“Oh,” said Roe, “what did he say?”

“I just heard him say to Mr. Evans—he's the assistant manager, you know—that he rather expected some new laces within a couple of weeks. So that must be pretty

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soon. If you would come in again— I should be very happy to show them.”

“Why, I believe that would be a good idea. How does Mr. Creamer get his laces? How do you know when they come in?”

“I don’t know until Mr. Evans brings them around, himself. And the finest pieces—the old ones, you know—we don’t have them often—they keep in the safe. I rather think Mr. Creamer brings them in himself—goes to New York and gets them—but I don’t know.”

“Does he, indeed!” said Roe. “That is interesting. But I presume it is the safest way, with those valuable pieces. I will come in again in a few days.”

Barbara was ashamed to go out without buying anything after all the trouble they had made. So she bought one little piece of Brussels, which made her feel very extravagant—and she and Roe went out together.

“Now, Miss Barbara,” said Roe, as they stood outside, “do you know what I mean to do next? My success in the matter of the lace leads me to go into Mr. Stanchion’s, the jeweler’s, to look at some diamonds and rubies. I do not think I know much about diamonds and rubies, but still I am tempted

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to look at some. If, by chance, he has any that are especially fine and at a low price—The price of some of those old laces was really a little low—although not very. Expenses are lower in a small place like this, of course,” he added, musingly, without regarding Barbara’s apparent perplexity at his words.

Barbara had clapped her hands at his suggestion. “Now, Mr. Roe,” she cried, “I was just wishing that I dared to go to Stanchion’s to look at some diamonds. I didn’t think of rubies. But I don’t dare. It would be absurd for me to be looking at diamonds and Mr. Stanchion knows it perfectly well.”

Roe smiled comprehendingly. “But for me,” he said, “who knows? I may be very rich—or only erratic. No. I dare and I will go, and I need not buy. I wish—it would give me much pleasure if you would go with me.”

But Barbara would not, and Roe, strangely elated, went on his way to Stanchion’s. Of course, Mr. Stanchion was not there, Barbara reflected. She had forgotten that when she spoke, and she was half tempted to follow the mysterious Mr. Roe to the jeweler’s.

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But she did not. It would look queer—anybody would think so—and Ted was cross enough already.

And, all this time, what was Ted doing? Pat's kindly efforts at soothing him had been of no use and Ted had gone pounding off on Jessica. Away they pelted, along the same road over which he had just come, over High Bridge and along the shore road as far as Cap'n Billy's, Timothy bounding beside them.

Then the impulse seized him to ride in. Perhaps some of Cap'n Billy's yarns, which he was always so ready to tell, would amuse him and drive away as much of his blues as his hard ride and the brisk wind had left. But the old man was not there, and far out on the water Ted saw the glint of his sail in the sun. He did not stop to wonder at that, although he knew that Cap'n Billy rarely went fishing in the afternoon; but back they went, Jessica and Ted and Timothy. And when Ted slipped down, at the stable door, Jessica was white with lather under the saddle and where the rein had rubbed her neck, and Timothy flopped down and panted, with lolling tongue. And there, behind Pat, Ted saw his father.

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“Edward,” said Mr. Romaine, sternly, looking at the steaming mare, “you have been riding the mare too hard. You certainly cannot deny it.”

“No, sir,” Ted answered, firmly, “I don’t deny it. I have.”

“What was the reason? There was no emergency, I am sure. What was the reason, Edward?”

Ted made no reply.

“So there was no reason,” Mr. Romaine went on, coldly. “I have no doubt it was merely to vent your surly temper. What a temper for a son of mine to have!”

Still Ted made no answer.

“I think it is only right, Edward,” his father said, after waiting in vain for Ted’s reply, “to forbid your riding to-morrow. I told you some time ago you must not ride the mare too hard. And now you may have done her serious injury. To-morrow you will spend in study—the whole day, Edward. Do you hear?”

“Yes, sir,” said Ted, simply. And without another glance at his son, Mr. Romaine stalked away.

“Oh, mather Ted, mather Ted,” said Pat sorrowfully, as he rubbed the drooping

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horse, "what ails ye? 'Tis a kind hear-rt ye have. Shure, I know well 'tis th' har-rd time ye have, some ways. Can't ye tell th' old man, now? Ah, 'tis crool t' ride a harse like that but f'r life an' death."

"I know, Pat," said Ted, very low. "I'm sorry. I hope I haven't hurt her."

"Shmall har-rm, this time, wid th' nur-rs-in' she'll get, an' 'tis all right she'll be wid a day's rest. But ye might kill her, mather Ted. She'd run till her hear-rt broke entirely, ye know well."

"I'm sorry, Pat. I won't do it again."

"An' God bless ye, b'y."

So it happened that Barbara did not play with Beverly Alston Lee the next day, for she would not go alone.

## CHAPTER IX.

It was on the second morning after that Barbara and Ted were riding slowly along the shore road again, Timothy ranging the fields on either side. Barbara was looking down at Jessica.

"Ted," she said, suddenly, "is anything the matter with Jess? Why aren't you willing to go a little faster?"

Ted flushed and laughed.

"I'll tell you, Barbara," he said. "I was ashamed to tell you yesterday why I couldn't go. It was my fault. I had ridden Jessica too hard the afternoon before and father was there when I got back. It was a punishment."

Barbara looked puzzled. "Ridden Jessica too hard the day before? Why, Ted, we drove the day before and we didn't have Jess at all."

"Yes," said Ted. "But we got back and you know I was in a temper. And I saw Roe meet you, Barbara, and that made me



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worse. So I got Jess and rode her hard all the way down here to Cap'n Billy's and back. It was a good thing I didn't ruin her—just luck—and I deserved to be punished for it. It did me good."

Barbara's eyes filled suddenly and then she smiled. "Oh, Ted!" she cried; and, impulsively, she touched Ted's free arm for an instant. "I'm sorry. I wish you wouldn't mind little things so much. But," she added, the merry look coming quickly into her eyes, "do you know what Mr. Roe went into Creamer's for? You'd never guess. It was to look at lace. And he knows a lot about it."

"About lace!" Ted said, rather contemptuously. "It seems funny for a man to know about lace. All lace looks alike to me."

"Well," said Barbara, "there's a lot to know about lace. I hadn't any idea how much until Mr. Roe told me something about it. We'll get him to tell us more. It's awfully interesting. And when we had got through at Creamer's, where do you think he went? You'd never guess. To Stanchion's, to look at diamonds and sapphires and rubies!"

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"Why," asked Ted, puzzled, "what does he want to buy diamonds and rubies for? Is he rich?"

"I don't know, Ted, and he doesn't know. And he didn't want to buy any. He just wanted to look at them. He seemed very much interested."

Ted turned and looked thoughtfully at Barbara. "Oh!" he said, slowly, "—oh!"

"Yes," said Barbara. "That's what I thought."

"Roe's kind of queer, isn't he, Barbara? I don't know what to make of him."

"Neither do I, Ted. Sometimes I wonder—"

"Yes," said Ted. "Well, we'll find out some day. Now, here's where we turn."

Beverly saw them as they came out of the wood. With a yell of delight he left Martha and ran at them, waving his arms.

"Will you pway with me?" he shouted.

Jessica danced a little as the yelling, gesticulating little figure drew near, and Tim ran gaily to meet it. Beverly stopped only long enough to give the dog a hug and to receive Tim's demonstration of affection. Then he ran on. Flight had stopped short and dropped his head, and Beverly did not

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hesitate. He threw his arms around the horse's head.

"You a good horsie?" he asked. "Will you let me wide you?"

And Barbara laughed and Ted picked up the little chap and set him before her. So, Ted holding him and leading Jess, the youngster rode in triumph to meet his mother.

"I am so sorry I couldn't come yesterday," said Barbara, when they were seated on the piazza. "But Ted couldn't come and they wouldn't let me come all the way alone."

"No," Mrs. Lee replied. "They tell me that the roads are perfectly safe—but I haven't the faith I ought to have, I suppose. I'm always a little nervous when I have to walk on them alone. I don't drive or ride, you know," she added, smiling.

"But you like to ride, don't you?" Barbara asked. "I should think anybody would like to."

"I used to," said Mrs. Lee. "But it is so long ago that I have almost forgotten. I haven't been on a horse for more than four years—nearly five." There was a little short sigh as she finished.

The sigh did not escape Barbara.

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"Wouldn't you like to, now?" she asked. "You might wear my skirt and Flight's a perfectly lovely horse. Ted will go with you."

Mrs. Lee's eyes danced. "Oh, I'd love to," she cried. "But it isn't civilized to go riding off on your horse the minute you've come."

"Oh, please do," Barbara urged. "I'll go to the shore with Beverly. Come, we'll—"

"Oh, I think I might find my habit if I looked," Mrs. Lee flushed. "I'm ashamed to confess that I've kept it and taken it about with me all these years. I suppose it must be quite out of fashion by this time. But that matters very little."

So Mrs. Lee rode off with Ted, as happy as Barbara herself, and Tim went with them. And Beverly took Barbara's hand and led her to the beach.

"I got a house," he announced. "You can come in it, but Tim can't."

The house was constructed of pieces of driftwood piled against a big rock. Barbara had to crawl in very carefully or it would have fallen about her ears. But she got in successfully—and out again, and back to

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call upon Beverly, the master of the house, who sat amidst his treasures—shells and pebbles and bits of broken crockery—and received her with a fine air.

Then, presently, Beverly was tired of receiving calls and said it was time for tea. So Martha ambled patiently to the cottage and came back with milk and crackers, which Beverly served to Barbara.

“This is tea, you know,” he said as he poured the milk. “Will you have any sugar?”

“If you please,” Barbara answered, “one lump.”

And thereupon Beverly dropped into the cup a small quartz pebble which he picked up from the sand. And Barbara laughed and began to sip her tea.

“An’ will you have some cake?” asked Beverly, very politely.

“Why—what kind of cake? My mother doesn’t allow me to eat fruit-cake. But if it is sponge—”

“Yes,” said Beverly, eagerly, “it is sponge.” And he passed the crackers.

Then Barbara took a cracker. “How delicious!” she said.

Beverly laughed, gleefully, and proceeded

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to make small-talk while they sipped their tea and munched their sponge cake.

"How did you make your house, Beverly?" asked Barbara at last, when the tea and cake were nearing their end.

"Why," the boy answered, "I just finded the sticks and leaned 'em against the rock, and I finded that thing and put it over, for the top."

"That thing," which he had put over for the roof, was queer enough to arouse Barbara's curiosity. She got up and looked at it. It was a yellowish kind of cloth, perhaps canvas, apparently oiled or varnished and evidently waterproof. It showed the creases of cords, as though it had been the wrapping for a bundle of some kind, tied tightly; and as Barbara looked more closely yet, she saw something that gave her a start. It was a little thing, only the remains of the bottom and case of what had once been a colored light, fastened to the middle of the cloth.

"Beverly," she said, so suddenly that the little fellow jumped, "where did you get this thing?"

"I finded it," he cried, "an' it's mine. I finded it wight on the beach, to-day. It was

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all wet. An' yesterday I finded another, but I losed it."

The smiling Martha explained that Beverly's "yesterday" meant any time in the past, and that particular one meant about three weeks before.

"Oh!" said Barbara.

"Yes," said Beverly, "an' it was all burned on the middle."

"Oh," said Barbara, again.

"Oh!" yelled Beverly. For he had glanced up and seen something that Barbara had not seen. "Oh, mother!" he yelled. "I want to wide."

Then Barbara turned, and there were Mrs. Lee and Ted sitting on their horses, not twenty feet away, and Timothy, panting and wagging. And Beverly had his ride up and down the sands on Flight's back, holding tightly to that patient animal's mane. And when that was done and the horses hitched they all sat together upon the sand.

"I've enjoyed my ride so much," said Mrs. Lee. "Thank you again. And what has Beverly been doing to amuse you?"

"We've been having a lovely time," Barbara answered, "playing house and having our tea. And where did you go?"

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Barbara thought Mrs. Lee's reply strangely hesitating. Ted said nothing.

"We went just down the road," said Mrs. Lee, "just up and down the road—and—and back. It was lovely to ride again—and—it was heavenly—until—"

"Why, Mrs. Lee," cried Barbara, "didn't Flight behave? Wasn't Ted nice? Did anything happen?"

"Oh, yes," sighed Mrs. Lee. "Flight is a beautiful horse—perfect—and nobody could have been nicer than—and I'm very foolish, but—but I was frightened— We met—"

And, to everybody's surprise, she burst into tears.

Martha started up, in her lumbering way, but Barbara was before her and ran to Mrs. Lee. She had no definite idea what she meant to do, but she was overcome by the impulse to give comfort. But Mrs. Lee checked her tears almost instantly.

"Thank you, dear," she said, taking Barbara's hand. "I hope I'm all right now. I was very foolish, but I suppose I'm nervous. A good deal has happened to me lately. It is only a little while since I heard that my husband was lost at sea."

"Oh!" cried Barbara. "I'm so sorry!"



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Mrs. Lee gave Barbara's hand a little squeeze.

"We hadn't seen him for more than two years," she said, "but it is hard, for I— Some time, dear, I may tell you, but not now."

"I'm so sorry!" said Barbara, again.

"And then we met this man who looked like somebody I am afraid of," Mrs. Lee went on. "It's absurd, for he can not possibly be here, but it frightened me. And that dear dog growled and bristled and the man went another way. Oh, what has he got now?"

For Timothy was racing up and down the beach, worrying and tearing something yellow, and Beverly was tearing after him as fast as his short legs could twinkle.

"Bad doggie!" he cried. "Gi' Bev'y his house! *My* house, bad doggie!"

But Tim evidently thought it was a fine game, and he refused to give up his spoil. He waited, his breast on the sand and his tail waving, until Beverly had nearly reached him; then, with mischief in his eye, he sprang up like a flash and dodged past. Then Ted called him and he came, dragging

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the yellow thing, and Beverly ran after and fell upon him.

“Tear’d my house a’ to pieces!” shouted Beverly.

“Never mind, dearie,” said Barbara, coaxingly. “It will do very well. Let Barbara take it a minute.”

So he handed it over and Barbara was showing it to Ted, calling his attention to the creases and the remains of the colored light, when there was another yell from Beverly.

“Oh, Cam Billy! Cam Billy! Cam Billy comin’, mother!”

And away he ran over the sand to meet the bent, stumpy figure plodding toward them. And Timothy trotted after, rather uncertain how his advances would be received. Cap’n Billy came up to them with the boy hanging to one hand and Timothy just behind. He greeted Barbara and Ted heartily.

“Hello!” he cried. “So ye’ve found your way down here, hev ye? Glad to see ye. Don’t go fishin’ now, eh, Ted?”

“When I get a chance,” Ted answered, smiling.

“Well,” returned the old man, “ye won’t

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get no chance while ye're goin' flyin' 'round in them airships. I guess the fishin' ain't none too good up there. Ship that's on the top o' the water 's good enough for me. I ain't a yearnin' to fly—not yet."

"I rode down to your shore a couple of days ago," said Ted, "and you were out—in the afternoon, too."

"Yes," said Cap'n Billy, "I been doin' consid'ble fishin' lately. Some kinds o' fishin' the arternoon serves better for, an' some kinds the mornin'. Now there's Cap'n Jabez, he caught a tub o' butter three day ago, an' he caught it in the arternoon, too—floatin' aroun'. I'd just been a wishin' 't I had some butter."

"Did you catch any?" Ted asked.

"No," answered Cap'n Billy, mournfully. "I guess the butter-kags 'd schooled an' gone out o' the bay. No, I didn't catch nothin' that day."

"Hard luck!" said Ted, sympathetically.

"Yes," Cap'n Billy said, "wa'n't it, now? But we can't expect to do well every day. Now," he went on, "this mornin' 't was diffe'nt."

"Butter?" asked Barbara.

"No, Barbara, not butter, but somethin'

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queer. I can't hardly make out what it is, but 's near 's I can figger, it's a foot-ball."

"A foot-ball!" Ted cried, in astonishment,

"Oh, let me see!" said Beverly. "I want it, Cam Billy."

"Well," said the old man, "mebbe I'll let ye play with it if ye're a good boy."

"I'm are a good boy," cried Beverly. "I want to pway with it. Where is it?"

Cap'n Billy brought forward his hand, which he had been holding behind his back, and showed an ordinary, round rubber foot-ball.

"'Course," he said, "it was blowed up when I found it—or partly blowed up—an' sailin' along 'fore the wind. But the air's 'bout leaked out of it."

Beverly was disappointed. "How can I pway with it?" he lamented. "It's all flat."

"Too bad, ain't it?" said Cap'n Billy. "Mebbe Ted c'n blow it up f'r ye."

And, with the help of a dry grass stem, Ted managed to blow it up. He could see nothing about it that was worthy of notice. It was one of the regular round rubber foot-balls, but it did seem a little queer that it should be floating out there in the bay. Barbara was interested in that foot-ball, too;

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youngster on that shore who could have lost the foot-ball in that way was Beverly. And it was not his.

“Cap’n Billy,” she asked, suddenly, “how far out was that foot-ball when you found it?”

The old man smiled again at the question. “Oh, mebbe a matter o’ four mile or so,” he said, “mebbe five.”

“And how fast should you think it was drifting?”

“Well, now,” he answered cautiously, “that’s hard to say. Mebbe a mile an hour, mebbe two.”

“Oh,” said Barbara. “I wondered.”

“Yes,” remarked Cap’n Billy. “’Tis strange.”

They watched Beverly for some minutes in silence. Then Barbara spoke again, so suddenly that the old man jumped.

“Cap’n Billy,” she asked, “do you know whether the launch went in this morning?”

“Great land, Barbara,” said he, “ye spoke so sudden ye give me a start. What d’ ye say? The launch? What launch? Le’s see—oh, ye mean that Fishin’ Club launch? Ha! Fishin’ Club! Now don’t it strike ye ’s strange they sh’d go ’way down there t’

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that there island an' take all that trouble an' come back with mebbe one fish—an' mebbe none? Must cost 'em a heap."

"Yes," answered Barbara, thoughtfully, "it must. And I shouldn't think Mr. Creamer would like to do it. I think he's rather—rather careful about spending money."

"Little mean, eh?" Cap'n Billy grinned. "Mebbe he is."

"Well," Barbara pursued, "has the launch gone in to-day?"

"Oh, the launch?" Cap'n Billy seemed reluctant to answer that question. "I dunno—not rightly. Seems to me I did hear one o' them puffin' Billies 'long 'bout day-light. But I couldn't see nothin'."

"I was only wondering," said Barbara. "You know we saw her go out two days ago and I thought perhaps it would be about time for them to get back to-day."

Beverly and Tim were having great fun with the foot-ball, and the others sat watching the game. Mrs. Lee was very silent and Barbara soon thought it time for her to go. Mrs. Lee's protests were faint.

"I know," she said, finally, "I am poor company to-day. I can't seem to get rid of

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my nervousness. But I hope you will come again soon and I promise to do better. Come often, dear," she added, impulsively, "—that is, if you would like to. It does me good to see you and I'm not always so stupid. Beverly will love to have you, and so shall I. And—and—" turning to Ted, "I suppose I ought not to call you Ted, but you won't mind if I do, will you? You don't want to begin, yet, being Mr. Romaine?" Ted smiled his pleasure. "You will come, too, won't you, Ted?"

And she gave him her hand—a very soft, nice hand—and Ted was ashamed to find his throat troubling him and his eyes growing hot. Not many people besides Barbara were so nice to him.

"Oh," cried Beverly, "you goin' home? Why don't you stay and pway with me some more?"

"We've stayed as long as we can, dearie, to-day," said Barbara, kissing him. "But we'll come again soon, and bring Timothy."

"Oh, will you? I like Timothy. Mother, I wish I had a doggie."

"When you are big enough to take care of him, sweetheart. Now, I think Captain Billy will tell you a story if you ask him."

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Beverly turned, beaming, to Cap'n Billy. "Will you?" he asked. "About a ship an' how the ship sunk an' you got on a island?"

The old man smiled and nodded. "Wrack, eh? Well, all right."

"Good doggie," yelled Beverly, falling upon Timothy and embracing him, "you come an' pway wi' Bev'y. Good-bye."

And Timothy licked the sweet little face most lovingly.

As Barbara and Ted rode away they turned. Beverly was snuggled down at Cap'n Billy's side, and the "wrack" was apparently under way. Mrs. Lee waved her hand.

"Oh, don't you think she's lovely, Ted," Barbara asked, enthusiastically, "and so interesting?"

Ted nodded.





## CHAPTER X.

The mysterious Mr. Roe's devotion to the airship seemed to increase as the summer passed. He went up on every possible occasion, at first only with Mr. Middleton. But as it became evident that he was much more familiar with machinery than Mr. Middleton himself, and much more expert in the management of the "Dragon-Fly," he was given a freedom that soon became unlimited. When Mr. Middleton was not using the airship, Roe was sure to be off in it, somewhere. Sometimes he took Barbara and both boys, sometimes Van alone; but most often he was off by himself.

Where he went when he was alone nobody knew. He might start off in any direction and come back from any other. He might come back in an hour or he might be gone all day. He ascended to great heights, Ted knew; for he had seen the "Dragon-Fly," more than once, go almost straight upward, her propellers turned down, until he could

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no longer find her, even with Van's glass. And although he could only guess where Roe went, he could not help noticing that whenever he was aboard they were most likely to spend the afternoon driving out to the southeast until the land was only a dim blue line on the horizon, and sailing around over the surface of the ocean until it was time to return. That suited him exactly and it suited Barbara, too.

In these long drives, at a speed which seemed to Ted to be equal to that of an express train, Roe would sit back at the wheel, apparently careless and unobservant, and tell them things. Ted heard all about lace, although he remembered little of it. And he heard much about the working of gasoline engines and their management. Roe called them "petrol" engines. And Ted remembered most of what he heard about them. And sometimes Roe would seem to have a flash of memory and tell strange tales of London and Liverpool—queer things about the docks and the big steamers. And then he always forgot again and stopped before his story was finished. Ted still disliked Roe, without knowing exactly why; but since that first call upon

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Mrs. Lee he had not hated him quite so much. And there was certainly something attractive about the man and something fascinating in the mystery that still enveloped him.

So there was nothing strange in their starting out one morning in the "Dragon-Fly," Barbara and Ted and Van and Mr. Roe. Mr. Middleton was unable to go and Mr. Bomaine had not yet been persuaded to try a flight, although he had promised to consider it. Roe had set the day and the time and had asked them several days in advance, which was unusual. But, after they had risen from the ground, he hung around in a way which Ted thought strange, floating slowly out over the bay, then circling back again. Roe was busy with the engines, as though they were not working to his satisfaction. Ted could detect no fault, and presently Barbara, with a queer little smile, went to one of the telescopes.

She was not there long. It was on their fifth circle, and as they passed out over the mouth of the harbor.

"I see something, Mr. Roe," said Barbara, quietly.

Roe looked up, smiling at her bright face.

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"Do you, Miss Barbara? You are very apt to, I think. What is it?"

"Only the Fishing Club launch, going out."

"Is it, indeed!" said Roe. "They seem devoted club members, do they not? Well, I believe the engine is all right, now. But these motors need an astonishing amount of tinkering. I am trying another little experiment."

"I hope it's quite safe, Mr. Roe," said Ted.

"What—the experiment? Oh, quite safe—quite safe. I think it will enable us to get a little more speed. But it's quite safe."

Roe kept his place at the engine and asked Ted to steer out toward the mouth of the bay. They did not seem to be making any remarkable speed and Ted said so.

"No," answered Roe, "not yet. We will lead up to it, easily. After a while we will try it."

Barbara was gazing out over the side and Van was at the wings, which had come to be his recognized post.

"Why," said Barbara, suddenly, "the launch is beating us. She has got ahead."

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"Has she?" said Roe, apparently with no particular interest. "Well, no matter. We could catch her easily enough if we wanted to."

He looked out, satisfied himself as to the launch, and cast a quick look all about the bay before he sat down.

"I saw something, too, Miss Barbara," he said, quietly but with his eyes sparkling.

"What is it?" Barbara asked.

"Did you ever see a whale?" Roe returned, giving question for question.

Barbara shook her head, smiling. "You can't fool us that way, Mr. Roe. I don't believe any of us has ever seen a whale, and I certainly don't expect to see one in the bay."

"Well," said Roe, "I think you might, at least, look around—that is—if the subject of whales interests you."

Van was already looking and Ted almost forgot to steer, in his efforts. But Barbara would not change her attitude.

"Will he spout?" she asked.

"Probably not for some time," Roe answered. "I saw him spout."

There was a shout from Van. "I see him! Over there, Ted, to the southeast—

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just rolling around. You can see him easy—”

“I see him,” cried Ted, “about three miles from us, I should think.”

Barbara was gazing listlessly out toward the shore where Mrs. Lee’s cottage stood.

“Somebody else has seen him, too, I guess,” she said. “Cap’n Billy’s coming out, and he seems to have a lot of stuff on the deck, as though he got it there in a hurry.”

Van looked through a telescope. “Yes,” he said, “he’s got a tub of whale line and a harpoon and a lance. I can see ’em. Bomb-gun, too, right near him. Going after him, I guess.”

“Great benches!” cried Ted. “Let’s watch it. Maybe we can help, too.”

Roe glanced ahead. If the people on the launch had seen the whale they gave no sign of it, but kept right on, heading out of the bay.

“Queer!” Roe muttered, half to himself. “Strange! Going fishing for bass and pass a whale without a word!” He sighed, unconsciously. “Well,” he said, “all right, Ted. Let her go down, Van.”

They could catch the launch easily, even with an hour’s handicap; but whales—

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They descended slowly, circling toward the whale, which was lying lazily on the water, rolling now and then. Twice he started to sound, but came up again at once, blowing two streams of spray upward and forward as he emerged.

"He seems disappointed," Barbara remarked, after the second attempt. "I should think he would bump his head."

Roe laughed. "Probably they seldom get fooled on the depth," he said. "But it would scarcely hurt one if he did bump his head—scarcely hurt him at all. There can't be more than six or seven fathoms of water where he is."

"About five," said Ted. "I s'pose if he stood on his nose on the bottom his tail would wave around in the air."

"No doubt," Roe replied. "He must be fifty or sixty feet long, I should think. But he couldn't hit his head very hard. Why, whales sometimes ram ships—butt them in the side—and sink them. At least—" A puzzled expression came over Roe's face—"at least, that is my impression. I was sure of it when I spoke, but now I—"

"Yes," said Ted, "that's true. Cap'n Billy has been wrecked that way. It hap-

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pens more often than you would think. And they were fifteen hundred miles from land."

"Indeed!" cried Roe. "What a situation! And how did they get back?"

"Oh," said Ted, "they started in the whale boats, but they were picked up the third day. You'd better get Cap'n Billy to tell you the story, Mr. Roe. He'll be glad to."

"I should like it much," said Roe. "Some day I will do so. No doubt he would have time to tell me now. But he might not be inclined."

Cap'n Billy's little sloop was moving very slowly. She was not a light weather boat, and although he had set every stitch of canvas he owned—even an old spinaker as a balloon jib—he could not hope for success if the whale happened to tire of loafing and knew the way to the open ocean. But the wind was fast increasing and Cap'n Billy kept on, trusting to luck and his knowledge of whales.

Suddenly the whale started and made off at a great pace, but with an ease that astonished everybody in the airship. Although his great flukes moved very gently and he left scarcely any wake, he soon distanced



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Cap'n Billy. Ted wondered what had startled him.

"I s'pose he saw the boat," said Van.

"No," said Ted, "for Cap'n Billy was coming up behind him. And it isn't likely he saw us, either. You know whales can't see very well. Maybe he heard the boat."

The "Dragon-Fly" was not more than a couple of hundred feet above the surface of the water and not far from the sloop. They were surprised to hear Cap'n Billy's voice.

"Hey, Ted!" called the old man. "Head him off fr me, can't ye?"

That seemed an inspiration. Ted waved his hand over the side and Roe put on more power. They were soon gaining on the whale, although not so fast as they expected.

"He'll run aground before long," said Ted, "if he holds that course and we don't catch him."

"And then," Roe observed, "I suppose Cap'n Billy would have difficulty in getting him."

"Yes," Ted answered. "He couldn't get him without getting aground himself, and if he succeeded in striking him I don't see how he could haul him off. Fact is," he added, after a moment's reflection, "I don't

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see how he's going to tow him anywhere, anyway, with that sloop of his. It would take him a week."

They ran on that course for ten minutes before they overtook the whale. Then Ted turned in a wide circle and Van let them down lower. They seemed to be almost skimming the water.

"Not too low, Van," said Ted, warningly.

They were approaching the monster from the side. Ted meant to turn him gradually and he must first go where the whale could see him.

The warning was none too soon. Just as Van shifted the wings and they rose a little, the whale shot ahead, with a few powerful strokes; and the next instant those great flukes rose straight in the air, just under the car. Barbara's heart jumped up into her throat. She had seen the gleam of cunning ferocity in the whale's eye as they rose.

"That was not so far off as it might have been," Ted remarked quietly. "We'll have to try it again."

For the whale had refused to be turned and was continuing on the course he had chosen. Barbara, looking back, could see

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Cap'n Billy standing up by his wheel, gesticulating and apparently shouting, although she could not hear a sound that he uttered.

So they tried it again, and Van was careful to keep at a safe height. But they failed again and had to try it a third time. And, that third time, the whale turned a little, stopped short, and then started back at the same great speed along the way he had come. And Barbara shivered as she saw him change his course again. He had seen the sloop and was heading straight for it.

"Great benches!" cried Ted. "He's ugly. I hope Cap'n Billy—"

He did not finish. Cap'n Billy was ready, his whale-line out forward so that it would run clear, and his harpoon close by his hand. In his chase, he had been running with the wind on the quarter. As soon as he saw what the whale was about he hauled in his sheets and, with the wind, which was by that time a lively breeze, abeam, he stood across the course of the enraged brute. It was a fair mark and the whale increased his speed and made for it, aiming a little ahead. If the two courses were held, he would strike the sloop fair amidship.

Barbara held her breath as she saw that,

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for she knew well enough that if the whale succeeded in his purpose there would be nothing left of the sloop but splinters. And it would be no easy matter to pick up the old man, with a furious whale searching the water. Van forgot his duties and so did Ted until the "Dragon-Fly" began to circle and sink. Roe turned the wings and Ted, with a start, gave the wheel a hurried turn.

The whale was within his own length of the boat, which was going well, and Barbara was almost ready to shriek. Then Cap'n Billy jammed his wheel hard over and grabbed the harpoon. The little sloop swung quickly into the wind and the whale, unable to change his course, shot alongside, deluging Cap'n Billy with the green top of the wave he was carrying and making the boat jump and heave. But the beast was so close that the old man had only to lean over and drive the harpoon in with all his strength. He wished then that he had taken the lance. The sloop had stopped swinging and was rolling heavily, the boom swinging slowly out as she rolled.

It had all happened in a breath. Ted heard a long sigh from Van and another from Barbara—and then his own, too, as

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the sloop seemed to be clear of the whale, a little strip of clear water showing between. But the boom swung out, and in that instant the great flukes rose gently and just tapped the swinging boom. The main sheet parted as though it had been a cotton string and the boom broke short in the middle, the end dropping as the whale passed and hanging by the sail. And in the next instant the bow of the sloop swung around with a jerk that threw Cap'n Billy off his feet.

That was a catastrophe, for he lost the line which it was his duty to pay out rapidly and carefully. Many a mile of whale-line had Cap'n Billy paid out, in his time, and such a misfortune had never overtaken him before. Two or three fathoms ran out smoothly enough and then, just as the old man was getting on his feet and reaching for the line again, a coil got out of the tub and kinked. Cap'n Billy made a frantic effort to shake it out, but failed; and, with a second jerk, which sent him back against the wheel, the sloop leaped ahead. The kink had caught around the bits on its way out.

It was a wild run the little sloop had started on, with a mad whale at the other

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end of that strong line. The boat was not made for such work and Cap'n Billy knew well that much of it would, very likely, pull her bows off or, at the best, strain her so badly that he could not keep her afloat. Getting to his feet as quickly as he could—rather painfully—he seized the bomb-gun and an extra bomb-lance and made his way forward.

None of those in the "Dragon-Fly" could see him distinctly, as he stood, apparently in the midst of a deluge; but they saw the smoke of the discharge and in a second they heard the report. The whale gave a convulsive leap, then slackened speed. Almost instantly there was another puff of smoke and a second report. And then the sloop sheered off and, the wind catching her jibs, she paid off and ran down the wind. Cap'n Billy had cut the line.

Ted and Van and Roe were so interested in watching the whale that they hardly noticed Cap'n Billy; but Barbara was most concerned for the old man, who seemed to her to be in need of help. Letting the sloop run far enough to be out of the way of the whale when he began his flurry, he got his jibs down and managed to round the sloop

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into the wind. Then he let his anchor go and, to Barbara's surprise, sat down and calmly filled and lighted his stubby, black pipe.

"He's in his flurry!" cried Van, excitedly.

Ted echoed the cry. Roe was quietly watching the whale, which was now beginning to circle slowly, occasionally blowing a feeble bloody spray from his blow-holes. It was not much of a flurry, after all. The two bombs had done their work too thoroughly, and after a few turns, each more feeble than the last, the monster lay quiet. Ted and Van were much excited, but to Barbara it seemed only pitiful that that great shape, filled, a few minutes before, with such tremendous power, should so easily be reduced to a mere mass of oil and blubber and bone. For the moment she forgot the danger Cap'n Billy had been in, and the furious anger of the whale at the unprovoked attack upon him seemed a fitting thing and admirable.

During the closing act of this tragedy the "Dragon-Fly" had been circling slowly above the dying whale. Now they ran down to the sloop. Cap'n Billy seemed to be waiting for them.

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Ted called down to him. "What you going to do now, Cap'n Billy?"

"Goin' to stay right here an' repair," answered the old man. "An' 's soon 's I've a new main sheet rove in I'll make fast to that there whale."

"But you can't tow him anywhere," said Ted.

"Ner I wouldn't if I could," said Cap'n Billy, sharply. "D'ye think I'd want to leave that carcass ashore? It'd drive off all the folks in ten mile. I'll cut in right here an' what I don't want I'll tow out to sea. I wish 't you'd send a tug down an' a couple o' whaleboats with a few smart men in 'em an' all the spades an' things they c'n use. I'll pay 'em. An' they'll want some casks an'— Oh, well, you go to Cap'n Sackett— Cap'n Jabez—an' he'll know just what to send."

Everybody was quite ready for this except Mr. Roe, and he succeeded in concealing his reluctance from all but Barbara. She was watching for it, and she noted his long look out toward the mouth of the bay as they started back to the town, leaving Cap'n Billy working on the sloop and the dead whale slowly drifting down toward him.



## CHAPTER XI.

By the morning after the capture of the whale, the two whaleboats Cap'n Billy had mentioned had become a fleet. Cap'n Jabez knew better than to send a tug.

"Eat up all y'r profits," he said, "them tugs will. I know a better trick 'n that."

So he got out a little old whaling schooner that he knew of—one which had been tied up in one of the docks for some years, to die a lingering but peaceful death. And he shipped a crew for a three days' voyage and found four whaleboats and a dory. And as the old schooner had no sails, the four whaleboats towed her down, the crew laboring manfully at the long oars. And in a convenient spot they anchored and for two days they cut in and tried out, the deck slippery with oil and the black smoke drifting slowly off to the eastward.

Mr. Roe seemed greatly interested in this process and the airship spent those two days hovering about the spot, only taking care

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to keep out of the smoke. From the car they could look down upon the schooner, with the diminishing carcass of the whale suspended alongside by head and flukes, see the perspiring men working from the staging set against the schooner's side, cutting out the chunks of blubber with their spades; see others of the crew, on the deck, putting the pieces into the try-pots—which looked like an enormous square brick stove—and feeding the fire with the remnants of the blubber which had been tried out. And, crowding close around, were screaming sea-birds; and all the boats of Durston, filled with sightseers.

Cap'n Jabez had taken charge. Cap'n Billy had never been a real captain, and he was quite content to act as mate—which meant hard work and a great deal of it. And Cap'n Jabez knew how to make a crew work—which, indeed, was the mate's duty, but Cap'n Billy knew that he was not equal to it. So, in spite of the number of green hands in that improvised crew, that whale was all cut in and the blubber tried out and the oil in barrels on the deck, in the afternoon of the second day. And Barbara and Ted and Van had seen it all, except one

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thing—taking the oil and the spermaceti from the whale's head.

Then the carcass was cut loose and the birds alit upon it and began to pick the bones; all manner of strange sea-birds that Ted had never seen before, and the eagles from Little River, but not the fish hawk, for the fish-hawk eats no carrion. There the old schooner rested for that night, her last voyage nearly done. The next morning the anchor would come up and the four whale-boats and the dory would toil slowly back to the dock with their prize.

But that afternoon, although the "Dragon-Fly" had been out nearly all day and there was nothing more to be seen there, Mr. Roe did not start back at once. He sent them down toward the mouth of the bay, flying higher than was usual except when he was alone. And, after circling once, they started on a straight course for home. Barbara looked carefully over the wide stretch of ocean spread out beneath them, but she could not find the speck she was looking for. It might have been only a whim of Roe's, this turn out to sea before going home, but Barbara was not satisfied.

"Ted," she said, when the airship was

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safely in its shed and they were walking down the driveway together, "would you mind going down to the wharf and staying there for an hour or so? It isn't late yet. I would go, but daddy doesn't like to have me. It's a kind of a nuisance to begin to be grown up. Lots of things I want to do, I can't."

"Yes," answered Ted, "I know. But then—" Perhaps he thought there were compensations. "I'll go, of course, Barbara, with pleasure. But I wish you could go, too."

"So do I," she said. "But I can't. And if the launch should happen to come in I wish you would manage to see the fish they have caught."

Barbara was often a puzzle to Ted, but he had learned that she generally had some good reason for her requests and that the best thing for him was to do as she asked. So he left her at her door and sauntered down to the wharf and seated himself upon the string-piece to see what would turn up.

It was pleasant enough, waiting there. Ted had spent many hours sitting upon that identical string-piece, his feet swinging over the water, dreamily watching the placid har-

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bor, interested in any fishing-boat that came in, or in the occasional coaster. Sometimes he had wandered over to the next wharf when there happened to be a vessel hauled down there, repairing; or even to the wharf beyond the next, where two of the old merchantmen lay rotting. But, most often, he was content to sit upon the string-piece, gazing out at the water and picturing to himself how it had looked when those two old merchantmen, fine clipper ships, had come in with their cargoes of silks and teas and spices and found places at the crowded wharves.

Now he was again seeing plainly the image of that long past time, and ghostly ships, manned by sailors in queer-looking clothes and with their hair in pigtails, were hauling in at the very wharf where he was sitting. Suddenly, something made him look up, and there, close beside him, stood Roe.

“Ah, Ted,” said Mr. Roe, smiling, “this is a pleasant place to pass an hour, is it not? I come here often, and I may guess that you do.”

Ted sighed at being brought back so abruptly to the present. “Once in a

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while," he said, "but not so often as I used to."

"Not so much time as you used to have?" Mr. Roe rejoined. "Going to school seems a needless waste of time, eh, Ted? See, there comes something."

Ted looked down at the water again. Almost under his swinging feet, just slowing up for the landing, was the launch he had come to see. He felt a new admiration for Barbara. If only he were as quick and bright as she was!

Roe was leaning lazily against a pile as Mr. Creamer and Mr. Stanchion came up the plank, carrying a box between them. Ted stood close behind, glad to be relieved of further duty. He felt sure that Roe would do all that was necessary or possible. It seemed that nothing escaped that strange man.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Creamer," said Roe, pleasantly. "You have had beautiful weather and I trust you have had good luck."

"Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Roe," Mr. Creamer returned.

Creamer's manner exhibited, usually, an excess of politeness. He had a way of bow-

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ing and rubbing his hands which always excited Ted's disgust. On this occasion, however, he seemed to have no wish to conciliate and he spoke rather gruffly. But Roe was not to be put off.

"I trust you have had good luck, Mr. Creamer," Roe repeated. "Your box seems heavy and I judge that you have caught some fish."

"One," answered Creamer, very short. Stanchion said nothing.

"A bass, I suppose?" Roe continued. "I have always wanted to see one of those great bass. Would you do me the favor of letting me look at it? It must be a large one."

"About a hundred pounds," said Mr. Creamer, with some show of pride. "Haven't weighed it yet, but I judge it is about that weight. If you had to carry it," he added, with a short laugh, "you'd think it weighed five hundred."

Roe stooped quickly and lifted one end of the box. "It is rather heavy," he said.

As Roe stooped, Creamer started as though he would have stopped him. But he was not quick enough.

"Would you mind letting me see it?" Roe asked again.

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Creamer hesitated, but only for an instant. "Can't open it here," he said.

"I am sorry," said Roe, "for I very much wish to see it. It is not only my curiosity," he went on, speaking rather confidentially, "I am trying to remember, and anything may—you see, Mr. Creamer? Perhaps at your house you would open the box? And let me see the fish?"

"Well—well," Creamer answered, after some hesitation, "although I think it strange that you insist, Mr. Roe."

"Ah," said Roe, smiling, "but I do so many strange things, you know! Thank you, Mr. Creamer."

Mr. Creamer and Mr. Stanchion started off, carrying the box between them, and Roe followed. Ted summoned courage enough to speak.

"May I come, Mr. Creamer?"

"Certainly, Ted," Mr. Creamer answered, puffing. "May as well have one more."

Roe offered to help with the box, but his offer was not well received and, with one of his queer smiles, he relapsed into silence. They soon arrived at Creamer's, the two principals much out of breath. The box was deposited beside the back steps.



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“And now,” said Roe, eagerly, “I will get a hammer, and a screwdriver or something, to open it, if you will tell me where to look. You must really let me help.”

“Not at all—not at all,” said Creamer. Roe was already half way to the shed and Creamer, frowning and muttering, yelled after him. “Here, come back! Couldn’t think of it, you know,” he added, more calmly. “My man’s job—but I forget, he is not here. I’ll do it myself.”

And, while Stanchion stood on guard by the box, Creamer bustled off to the barn and bustled back again with a hammer and a screwdriver. Then he proceeded to open the box in the approved manner in which boxes are opened with hammers and screwdrivers. And his temper, which was already somewhat ruffled, was not improved when the blade of the screwdriver bent almost double.

“Oh, most unfortunate!” said Roe, sympathetically.

“Made of cheese!” growled Creamer. “Have to get a crow-bar.”

But they effected an entrance at last by smashing in the top. Then the broken

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boards were torn away, exposing a piece of yellow tarpaulin.

Roe, who had been eager before, seemed quite excited at the sight of the yellow tarpaulin, and Ted remembered little Beverly Lee's house on the beach and the thing Tim had played with. Roe was bending over the box when Stanchion stooped and turned back the tarpaulin. There lay a great bass! Roe could hardly keep the disappointment out of his voice. "A fine fish, indeed, Mr. Stanchion," he said. "I am anxious to feel the weight of it. I have never seen such a fish before. You will not mind if I lift it?"

Stanchion nodded, without speaking, and Roe, grasping the fish clumsily by the tail, lifted it out of the box with both hands. In so doing he managed to get hold of a corner of the tarpaulin and that came out, too, falling upon the ground and exposing, in the bottom of the box, only a few crumpled newspapers. Ted wondered at his clumsiness.

"A fine fish, indeed!" Roe repeated. "A great fish! It must require great strength and skill to catch such a fish. It does not seem to help me to remember, but I thank

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you for your courtesy, Mr. Creamer, and you, Mr. Stanchion.”

As he spoke he replaced the bass in the box, upon the newspapers. Creamer stooped at once and picked it up, while Stanchion put back the tarpaulin.

Roe's mouth twitched, as though he would smile, but he did not. “I thank you again, gentlemen,” he said. “Good afternoon.”

Creamer nodded, curtly, but Stanchion did not even look up. Roe and Ted went out together.

“Very interesting, Ted,” said Roe, as they walked down King street. “A very fine bass! A most interesting catch! And so skilfully done! It must require great skill, Ted, to catch a fish of that size in such a manner that his mouth bears no mark of the hook.”

“No mark of the hook!” cried Ted.

“If one were only skilful enough for that!” sighed Roe. “No doubt Mr. Creamer's affable manner would entice any fish—or perhaps he sings to them.”

Ted did not know what reply to make to this strange speech, so he made none. But, for days, the thing stuck in his memory; Roe's curious interest and eagerness, his evi-

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dent disappointment when he saw the fish, and his apparent satisfaction after he had put it back. He told Barbara all about it, but he was as puzzled by her smile as he had been by Roe's behavior.

"Never mind, Ted," she said. "We shall see before very long. And do you know that Mr. Roe has asked your father to go up with us next week? *And he's going.*"

Ted tried not to show his surprise. "Oh," he said. "How did you find out?"

"Mr. Roe told me," she answered. "You wait and see."

## CHAPTER XII.

It was true. When the appointed day came, Mr. Romaine was really genial at breakfast. Instead of keeping behind his paper, as was usual, he actually conversed with his son.

“You may not know, Edward,” he said at last, “that I have accepted Mr. Middleton’s invitation to go up in the airship to-day.”

Ted did his best to appear surprised and if he did not succeed very well his father was too thoroughly absorbed in his own plans to notice it. As they walked down King street to the Middletons, Ted was very nearly happy.

“I was unable to persuade your mother to go, Edward,” Mr. Romaine remarked. “Possibly she is wise, for I fear she would not enjoy it. She is hardly well enough for such an experiment.”

Ted had almost forgotten his mother. Indeed, there was very little to remind him that he had one. But he reflected, with a little resentment, that she was well enough

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to drive every afternoon or to make calls or to dine out whenever she was inclined to. He rarely saw her. Barbara's mother, now— At this point he stopped thinking and began to tell of what they had done in the airship; and he was soon talking eagerly of Mr. Roe's skill—although he had not yet overcome his dislike for him—and of Cap'n Billy's capture of the whale. And Mr. Romaine listened with some show of interest. But when they were finally launched into the air and driving out over the water, Mr. Romaine's interest seemed to change.

"Don't you think, Middleton," he asked, after a quarter of an hour of growing nervousness, "that it may be a little risky to fly—or whatever you call it—over the ocean? Suppose—"

"I decline to suppose, Romaine," Mr. Middleton answered. "But, anyway," he added, smiling, "probably the water is safer, on the whole. It is softer than land, as a rule. If we *must* fall, we would rather fall into the water."

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Romaine, thoughtfully. "You used to go swimming, didn't you, Middleton, when you were a boy?"

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"I haven't got over the habit yet," returned Mr. Middleton.

"Well," Mr. Romaine pursued, "did you ever try to dive and miss it, and fall on your stomach?"

Mr. Middleton laughed. "I haven't forgotten how it felt," he said. "I guess there wouldn't be much choice."

"Do you prefer cruising over the water?" Mr. Romaine asked, after a short silence.

"I have very little to say about it," Mr. Middleton answered. "Roe goes his own way, as a rule. Now, I've been wishing I could run over and call on Eastman, but I can't seem to get there. Roe won't let me. Why, I can't even get a chance to show Eastman this airship. He came over a couple of weeks ago, for the second time, but Roe had the "Dragon-Fly" out over the Bermudas somewhere. He's a terrible autocrat."

Mr. Middleton smiled as he finished and looked at Roe; but Roe's face was inscrutable. He did not appear to have heard the remark.

"To-day, now," Mr. Middleton went on, "I've no doubt he's aiming for some inaccessible desert island which he has discov-

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ered—the Fishing Club—Bleak Island, for instance.”

Barbara clapped her hands. “Oh, yes,” she cried, “please do. It’s early. There’ll be lots of time.”

Roe smiled at that. “Since you all seem to wish it,” he said, “we will go to Bleak Island.”

They were passing out of the bay by this time and Mr. Middleton looked out ahead.

“To my inexperienced eye,” he remarked, after a long look, “there appears to be some fog out there.”

Roe nodded. “I have seen it,” he said, “but it is thin and will soon burn off or blow away. It need not trouble us.”

They could all see the fog at last, although for some time it was so dull and vague that it seemed only to mark the horizon. At some places it lay close upon the water, at others it hung a little way above, in a thin sheet which sank, now and then, rested for a while upon the surface, and then rose a few feet from it.

The “Dragon-Fly” was high enough to clear the fog entirely, and Roe showed no hesitation in choosing his course, although there was nothing visible below to guide



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them—nothing but that tranquil sheet of vapor shining in the morning sun, waving slowly, like a gently-shaken blanket, and sending up, here and there, little curling wisps that melted away and vanished. Barbara sat looking out over this dazzling sea of fog, wondering vaguely at the contrast between its brilliance as she saw it and the thick, wet grayness of fogs as she knew them best; and recalling the boiling, tumbling top of the thunder-cloud, so different from this tranquillity. Ted was absorbed in the fact of his father's companionship.

"Look!" cried Mr. Romaine, suddenly. "What is that curious thing sticking up through the cloud? It looks like the top of some vessel's mast."

It was strange to see a vessel's topmast—for that it certainly was—sticking up out of the fog not far ahead of them and almost on the same level. And as they looked, the fog-sheet waved gently and for an instant the peak of the flapping sail showed. They could hear the lazy beat of the canvas.

"You are keeping us a little low, Van," said Roe. "We might have happened to carry away her topmast. But let us go as

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we are, now. We may as well see what she is."

Barbara thought she detected a suppressed excitement in his manner, although he spoke very quietly. But, she reflected, she was always looking for something strange in his manner, and it was quite likely that she was finding what was not there. Nobody else seemed to see Mr. Roe as she did. Still, they were all very quiet as the engines were slowed down; and, scarcely moving, they circled cautiously.

Roe called Ted to the wheel and went to one of the telescopes. The mysterious topmast had disappeared. The fog must have lifted somewhat, and Barbara, not knowing clearly why she was doing it, went to the other telescope. There was nothing to be seen but the vague brightness of the fog-sheet. Then that disappeared and she felt the cool dampness of the fog about her. She knew, without looking up, that they were enveloped in it; but whether they had gone lower or the fog had risen she could not tell until a glance showed that Roe was managing the wings. Suddenly, almost below her, she saw the boat. Surprised, she looked up quickly. They were still enveloped in

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fog. So they must be still within the fog-sheet, no part of the "Dragon-Fly" showing below it, and there they would stay; for Roe was very busy, his hands on the wing-adjusters, his eye at the telescope. Barbara turned again to look at the boat.

They were not a hundred feet above the deck—too close for her to see it clearly through the telescope, but she could see the vague outlines of a sloop lying motionless upon the smooth surface of the sea, her main-sail swinging slowly as she rose on the long swells. The two men in her seemed to be aware that something was hanging over them, for they kept looking up, uneasily. Before Barbara had time to see more, the fog had shut it out altogether. She looked up at Roe. None of the others had seen what he and she had seen. He did not speak aloud, but she understood that the fog-sheet was lifting and there was danger that they would be caught spying. And there was the eager look in his eyes that she had seen there once or twice before.

When the "Dragon-Fly" seemed to be safely out of hearing, Mr. Romaine spoke.

"I am really curious," he said, "to have the experience of steering an airship. It

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can't be so very difficult and I used to be able to steer a boat well enough. Do you think I might try it, Middleton?"

"We'll try it together, Romaine," Mr. Middleton answered. "My son is monopolizing this wing business, and I will put him out—temporarily. The fog is all below us now."

"I would rather like to see that boat," said Roe. "Do you suppose you could find it?"

They were quite ready to try and were soon driving through the fog again. Occasionally they caught glimpses of the sun-lighted balloon while the car was still enshrouded.

"This is getting thinner," Roe remarked, "burning off fast, now."

He had hardly spoken when there was a light blow against the bow of the car and the sound of something grinding and scraping along. The "Dragon-Fly" swayed and there was a splintering crash. The car swung back.

"Well," said Mr. Romaine, with a nervous laugh, "we made a bullseye that time, Middleton. That was her topmast."

"I rather thought we should be able to

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find it," Mr. Middleton replied, quietly. He shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "I'm getting used to paying damages," he said. "Now we must hunt 'em up again. But we'll wait. This fog 'll be gone in a few minutes."

In a quarter of an hour the fog-sheet broke and the remnants melted rapidly away in thin smoke-like wisps. The sloop, her topmast hanging by the stays, lay but a short distance from them. Mr. Romaine headed toward it while Mr. Middleton sent the "Dragon-Fly" slowly down until they were almost skimming the surface of the water. They were soon within easy hailing distance.

"Hello!" Mr. Middleton cried. "Very sorry for the accident."

The men in the sloop were looking up at the airship and at the faces showing above her rail. Barbara noted that Roe's face was not one of those that showed. One of the men growled some reply but nobody could understand what he said. The "Dragon-Fly" came nearer yet. They could talk from boat to boat easily.

"If you'll run up to Durston," said Mr. Middleton, "I'll put in a new topmast for you and pay you for your time besides."

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The reception which this offer met was astonishing. The men in the sloop looked startled; then one of them spoke hastily.

"Haven't time," he answered. "Can't you toss us something, right here, to make it good?"

"Very sorry," Mr. Middleton returned, "but I haven't a dollar with me. But I can fix you up all right in Durston. You come up there and I'll make it right. It isn't much of a sail."

The men hesitated, but only for an instant. "Can't do it," said the one who had spoken before. "Haven't got time. 'Tain't any great damage, anyway. I guess we can fix her up all right."

"Well, then," said Mr. Middleton, "just give me your address and I'll send you the price of your topmast."

"Oh, no matter," was the strange reply. "'Tain't much hurt, and I haven't any address. I'm here and there, afloat most of the time. When I get time I'll stop at Durston and fix it up with you."

Barbara did not hear Mr. Middleton's reply. She had glanced up and had surprised a look upon Roe's face; a look of savage hate that was gone immediately.

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But she had seen it and she wondered again. The others were still gazing out at the sloop, which was now being rapidly left behind.

"Well!" said Mr. Romaine. "You don't meet that kind often, I guess, Middleton. Perhaps I might help you to make up the amount if you care to—and it isn't too large."

"My first experience of having damages refused," answered Mr. Middleton. "But it seems strange they should be so unwilling to run up to Durston. It looks a little queer to me. So, although I am obliged to you, Romaine, I don't think I will make the effort to do anything for them here. If they come up I will do the right thing. They don't seem to want to go to Durston. I wonder why."

"I wonder," Roe remarked, quietly. "Shall we go on to Bleak Island, Mr. Middleton, or shall we go back?"

"Oh, go on," cried Barbara. "It's only a little way now, and I want to see it. I've always wanted to."

Bleak Island was well named. It was only a fragment—a remnant of the load of gravel and boulders dropped there in past ages by some expiring glacier. It was

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almost round, less than half a mile across, a slight indentation on the landward side making a poor harbor, but the only one there was; beaten, on the ocean side, by the great surges which were slowly but relentlessly eating it away.

The "Dragon-Fly" sailed slowly across this barren spot, as low as it was safe to go. They saw the fishing stand, a rickety structure built out into the surf, on stakes which looked as if they could not stand through a winter; then the treeless slope, scantily covered with stiff, wiry grass. On the harbor side was the club house, a small, rough building, low and strongly built. They passed on to the harbor, seeing no sign of life.

"Queer thing there," Van remarked. "See the stakes. Looks like a fish pound."

"That's just what it is," said Mr. Middleton. "You can see the top of the net plainly enough. I wonder what it's for."

As he spoke there was a gleam in the water within the pound and a great fish broke the surface, shooting along for a short distance, then dropping out of sight again.

"I suppose that's where Creamer keeps the fish he has caught," said Mr. Romaine,



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with a short laugh. "Isn't that it, Mr. Roe?"

"Probably," said Roe.

Then they left the desolate island behind them and headed for home. As they rose for their flight, Ted glanced over toward the sloop.

"Look!" he cried. "There's the launch alongside her. I guess they're going to help her."

"They've got a line," said Mr. Middleton, "and they're going to tow her. Probably they will tow her to the island, so that she can make repairs. I'm rather relieved. She'll be all right now, won't she, Roe?"


Roe had been looking through one of the telescopes and he turned away with a smile.

"No doubt," he said, "she will be all right now."

And as he started up the other engine he began to hum a gay tune—which was a new thing for him. Truly, he did many strange things.

## CHAPTER XIII.

It was a new experience for Ted to be on terms of intimacy with his father—to be treated as though he were a rational being, with sensibilities which should be considered, with thoughts that might, occasionally, be worthy of expression. For some days this intimacy lasted, with the talks at breakfast, then a walk together around the place or an inspection of the stable. Ted's shyness and the feeling of resentment—of hostility to his father—were wearing off, and he began to realize, very imperfectly, what a boy's father might be to him. But the habit of years was too strong. The conversation languished, at breakfast, Mr. Romaine becoming more and more completely absorbed in his paper. The walks were abandoned; with trains to catch there was not time for them. But, even then, Ted was happy in the recollection of this touch of companionship with his father. And he rode with Barbara and surprised her by his cheerfulness, and they



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explored the country that they knew so well already. Their rides took them down the shore to the Lees' more often than anywhere else, and Barbara played with Beverly and was as happy as a sweet-tempered girl can be when those about her are happy. And Mrs. Lee rode Flight up and down the strip of upland, within sight of the others, but no persuasion could get her out upon the road. And Beverly had his "wides," sitting in front of Barbara, or alone, with Ted holding him on.

Ted was not surprised when the end came. The short dream was too bright to last. It was one morning, when, too full of joyous life to walk sedately down the stairs, he jumped from the roof of the little porch outside his window—it saved time, too, when he was going to the stable—and, just as he jumped, when it was too late to stop or change his course, his father stepped out of the door below. Ted just missed him and got upon his feet again, very red and very apologetic.

"Edward," said Mr. Romaine, with a return to the old familiar sternness, "what do you mean by coming down in that manner! Have I not told you not to do so?"

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"Why, no, sir," Ted answered. "I didn't understand it so. You told me not to slide down the columns and I have not slid down them since."

"Well, well, Edward," Mr. Romaine returned, more kindly, "I do not mean to be unduly strict. But you should know that that is not a proper way to come down. Where were you going?"

"To the stable, father," said Ted. "I was expecting to ride with Barbara Young this morning."

"Barbara is a nice girl," said Mr. Romaine, thoughtfully, "a thoroughly fine girl." He was turning away, but stopped, half turned. "What about your lessons, Edward? Are you getting on well?"

Ted did not feel so sure as he wished he did. "I—I think so, father," he said, with some hesitation. "I have done a little this morning and I mean to study some more when we get back."

"Procrastination, Edward, procrastination!" said his father, smiling faintly. "It is not safe. What are you working on now?"

"My Greek," Ted answered, dubiously. "I am reading up Xenophon."

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"Ah, indeed! Xenophon, as I remember him, did not strike me, at the time, as wildly exciting. But they must have been more or less exciting times to Xenophon."

Ted did not know what answer to make to this remark, so he smiled his assent, hoping that his father would not pursue the subject. His hopes were vain.

"I believe, Edward," Mr. Romaine went on, "I should enjoy hearing you read a little of your Greek. I think I might recall it. There is time, before your ride, for a paragraph or so."

Reluctantly, Ted followed his father into the house and got his Xenophon. Then he read a paragraph, rather haltingly. Mr. Romaine listened, amused but frowning.

"A little lame, Edward?" he observed. "I should say so. I wonder, now, if you have much idea what you are reading about."

"Why—" said Ted, surprised and apprehensive, "why, I—I think so."

"Do you know what a hoplite is—or a satrap—or a parasang? What is a hoplite, Edward?"

"A light-armed soldier," Ted answered, glibly.

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"Very pat," Mr. Romaine returned.  
"And a satrap?"

"A—a captain—or something."

"Very true. A captain or something, probably something. A comprehensive answer, Edward. And a parasang is a lieutenant or something, I presume?"

This manner of Mr. Romaine's was the hardest thing for Ted to bear. It stung and made him smart, and he was almost ready to cry with rebellious anger. Even if he had been inclined to use that manner himself, he could not use it to his father. It took a great effort of will to control his temper.

"A parasang is—is a short sword."

Mr. Romaine could not repress his smile, but his expression was not wholly one of amusement.

"Rather long for a sword, Edward—rather long for a sword. On the whole, I recommend further study. Postpone your ride, Edward, and discover, if you have the wit, what a parasang is."

It was a blow. "But, father," Ted remonstrated, "I promised Barbara."

"I am sorry for that," said Mr. Romaine, "but circumstances beyond your control

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make it impossible for you to keep your promise."

"But—but," Ted pleaded, "Jess needs exercise."

It was a poor plea. "Patrick can exercise the mare," Mr. Romaine answered. "You will devote the time to the study of the parasang—and other matters in connection with your Greek."

There was open insurrection in Ted's face.

"And in regard to your manner of coming down from your room, Edward," Mr. Romaine added, "I want the use of the porch stopped. You knew perfectly well that any method which involved your climbing on the roof was included in my prohibition. You will surely break your neck. Learn to obey the spirit of the law." This was, perhaps, a dangerous principle. "And the letter of the law, of course," he said.

Without another word, Mr. Romaine rose and went out, leaving Ted mortified and angry and unhappy; unhappy with that old reckless hostility toward his father which he thought was gone, never to return. He threw down his Xenophon and went out to the stable.

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Pat was leading Jessica out and greeted him cheerily.

“Don’t bother, Pat,” said Ted, in the depths of dejection, “for I’m not going.”

Pat looked up in amazement. “Not goin’!” he cried. “Not goin’! An’ is it not goin’ ye are, this beeyootif’l marnin’—an’ the chanst t’ ride wid Miss Barb’ra? Shure, thin, Masther Ted, what’s he afther doin’ t’ ye, now?”

Timothy seemed to recognize and appreciate Ted’s state of mind. He rose slowly and touched Ted’s hand with his tongue for an instant, then stood looking up wistfully into his face. Ted rested his hand on the dog’s head but did not look at him.

“Oh,” he said, kicking the pebbles that were nearest, “it’s because I didn’t know what a parasang was.”

“An’ is it, now?” said Pat, sympathetically. “So he kapes ye frim ridin’ f’r th’ bit iv a parasang—an’ wid Miss Barb’ra! ’Tis Pat Mulloy ’ll be sayin’ a wurrud t’ him some fine marnin’. An’ f’r why sh’d a b’y know annythin’ iv parasangs? Shure, thim things don’t be used now at all. ’Tis a long time they don’t be used. I mind well whin they was give up.”



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Ted smiled in spite of himself. "It isn't anything about horses, Pat. Or, at least, I don't think it is."

"Well, thin, right ye are, Masther Ted. It has th' sound iv Frinch. Shtop—wait till I think. Shure, I used t' know me bit iv Frinch. There! Now I have it. I knew well 'twas known t' me. Will I tell it ye?"

Ted nodded.

"Well, thin, hark t' me. Frinch, is it? Pere-o'-Sang, an' that's Father o' Blood, d'ye mind. 'Tis done, an' shmall trouble. Run afther him quick an' tell it him."

Ted shook his head. "No use, Pat. It's Greek."

"Greek, is it?" cried Pat. "Th' dagoes or is it thim old fellys? An' what is it ye want o' thim? Shure, they be no good, thim dagoes."

Timothy left his master and started off down the drive, on a businesslike trot. Neither Ted nor Pat noticed it.

"It's the old fellows, Pat. We have to study about them, you know, and read things they wrote. So I've got to go in and study. If Barbara comes—"

"Well," said a gay voice, "if Barbara comes—what then?"

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And Ted looked up and there sat Barbara on Flight, smiling brightly at him. He and Pat must have been absorbed not to hear the crunching of the gravel, not to know that she was there. Ted flushed and was more dejected than ever.

Barbara did not give him time to speak. "Why, Ted," she said, reproachfully, "what makes you so late? Jess isn't saddled—and I do believe she isn't even rubbed. Pat, aren't you ashamed?"

"Bliss y'r sweet face, Miss Barb'ra, I am that, an' more. F'r why, here's Masther Ted fair dyin' f'r his ride wid ye, an' f'r th' want iv a parasang he can't do it."

Barbara looked puzzled. "What do you mean, Pat? What has a parasang to do with it? Did your father ask you how many parasangs we were going to ride to-day, Ted?"

"I'm awfully sorry, Barbara," said Ted, bravely, "but father says I must stay at home and study my Greek. He made me read some to him and then he asked me some questions—and—and I said a parasang was a short sword—"

Barbara's laugh rang out at that. "Oh, Ted!" she cried. "That's lovely! A short

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sword! But why didn't he just laugh and tell you? How could he help it?"

"Easy!" growled Ted. "It's the easiest thing there is for him to help laughing. And I've got to learn about parasangs and satraps, and when I said I'd promised, that didn't make any difference. I'm awfully sorry, Barbara."

Barbara sighed. "So am I, Ted. But you can't help it, of course. If I didn't think your father wouldn't like it, I'd stay and help you—or study with you. I might not help. But Beverly expects me and he'd be disappointed. I hate to disappoint a child, Ted."

"I know you do, Barbara," Ted answered, while Pat muttered something about the kind heart of her. "But I wish you wouldn't go alone. Somehow, I don't like to have you riding about alone."

"Oh, Teddy, I think it's safe enough," said Barbara, laughing at his fears. "I wish I didn't have to go alone, but I don't like to give it up. And maybe you can come this afternoon."

Ted was evidently uncomfortable. "Maybe I can," he said. "But I wish— I'm afraid it's going to storm, too," he added,

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looking up at the sky. "It's thickening up in the west already. And it looks windy."

"No use, Ted," Barbara said. "You can't scare me out of it. I guess it won't storm before afternoon. And it wouldn't hurt me if I did get wet. Is it going to storm, Pat?"

Pat cast a weatherwise glance up at the sky. The sunshine was less bright than it had been, and a gauzy veil of white was slowly drawing across, thickening to a dull, dirty gray in the west.

"Shure, thin, Miss Barb'ra," he said, "I'm thinkin' 'tis throe. It has th' look iv it."

"I believe," said Barbara, "that you are a pair of conspirators."

"Niver a bit," Pat protested.

"Well, I'm going, anyway," said Barbara, "and I will see you this afternoon, I hope. Good-bye."

Ted muttered his good-bye gloomily and turned back to the house, to investigate parasangs and satraps. Jessica watched Flight disappearing down the driveway. As Pat led her back to her stall she may have been somewhat mystified at being left behind. Timothy hesitated. He ran gaily along beside Flight for a short distance, turned

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and waited for Ted; and when Ted did not come, Tim still stood there, uncertain. At last, with drooping ears and tail, and with many longing backward looks, he ambled slowly to the stable. He could not understand it.

Barbara did not feel very gay as Flight took her along the shore road. It was a disappointment. She had expected so much of good to come from Ted's new relations with his father, and now here it was, all spoiled, and by such a little thing! Oh, well, perhaps it would come right again in time. She would do her best. And now there was little Beverly. The poor little chap never saw other children and his mother was not happy, although she tried not to be unhappy. That was Barbara's very nearest duty; so she spoke to Flight and quickened their pace. And Beverly and Mrs. Lee were waiting for her and seemed sorry not to see Ted. Then Beverly had his ride, but Mrs. Lee did not care for hers. So they sat on the piazza of the little cottage and amused the boy until it was time for Barbara to go.

"My dear," said Mrs. Lee, as Barbara was about to start, "I wish you would stay longer, but I do not feel easy to have you

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riding about these roads alone and I shall be glad when you are safe at home again. I am foolish, I have no doubt, but I can't help it. And I saw a strange boat this morning. It just hung around for an hour, right out here, and then disappeared."

"But, Mrs. Lee," Barbara protested, "it's nothing to see a strange boat. Why, any kind of a boat might come in here. There's no reason why they shouldn't."

"Oh, I know very well it is foolish," Mrs. Lee answered, with a little, nervous smile, 'but I can't help it. So do be careful, won't you? I shall take Beverly and Martha and go over to Captain Billy's for a while."

Barbara promised to be careful, but she smiled as she rode away at the recollection of the warnings she had received that day. Then her smile faded as she thought of poor Mrs. Lee's nervousness and her loneliness. If only there were room in their own house—there was room enough in Mr. Middleton's. The very thing! She would ask him. She felt sure that he would be glad to do it. Just a little visit from Mrs. Lee and Beverly, and it would be so much to them and so little for him. And just as she had reached this highly satisfactory conclusion

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her train of thought was very abruptly broken.

A man jumped out from behind the thick bushes that were scattered, in clumps, along the side of the road. He was at Flight's head before Barbara realized his intention.

"Just wait a bit," he said, with an unpleasant smile. He stretched out his hand and seized the bridle, close by the bit.

Barbara wished, as she glanced up, that Timothy had elected to come with her. And in that quick glance she saw two things. She thought she had seen the man before, although she could not, at the instant, remember where; and she saw, a rod or two farther on, another man, ready to head her off if she succeeded in breaking away from the first.

She was not frightened. "Let the horse go," she commanded.

"Oh, no," said the man, still with that unpleasant smile. And he took a step nearer, meaning, apparently, to seize her wrist with his other hand.

Although Timothy was not there, Barbara was not defenseless. Her crop was in her hand and the butt of that crop was loaded. Like a flash she brought the loaded end

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down upon the hand that held the bridle, and again upon the other hand stretched out toward her, both blows with all her strength. With an oath, the man let go the bridle; and, at the light touch upon the rein and the quick word in his ear, Flight wheeled, took the ditch and the stone wall easily in two of his clean strides, and was off across the field.

“Oh, you treasure of a horse!” cried Barbara. Then she looked back.

The man who had stopped her was nursing his knuckles and swearing that the bones of his hands were broken. And the other man was cursing him for a fool. She was not yet out of hearing.

“You fool!” cried the second man. “Don’t you know it was the wrong one? It’s your own fault.”

“Fool yourself!” cried the first man. “Why didn’t you do your own job? You’d have found it was the wrong one, all right, same as I did.”

And they cursed each other, drawing nearer all the while, until they stood together in the dust of the road, talking more quietly. Then they started back, the way Barbara had just come; and in that instant



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she knew who they were. They were the two men who had been in the strange sloop whose topmast the "Dragon-Fly" had broken. And Barbara remembered their unwillingness to stop at Durston, and she remembered Mr. Roe's face as he watched them. Then she thought of Mrs. Lee and the fears she had thought foolish, and she was glad the call had been planned at Cap'n Billy's.

"The wrong one!" she said to herself, with sudden illumination. "Could they have meant— Oh, I must hurry."

If what she feared was true, she could do no good by going back alone to Mrs. Lee's. They would be safe at Cap'n Billy's for a while. But she must get help and take Mrs. Lee away from that lonely place. So Flight leaped the wall again and took the road and sped along without urging and with the ease with which he did everything that a horse should do. What a treasure of a horse! The sky was a thick gray by this time and the wind was blowing in freshly from the bay; an ever freshening wind out of the east, with a weight in it that meant more to come. And Barbara noted it and thought, with a little glow at her heart, of Ted's weather

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wisdom and of his uneasiness about her going on her ride alone. But perhaps—perhaps, it was lucky that she had come.

With the same easy stride, Flight carried her up over the arch of High Bridge, past the few houses on the other side and over the four miles to Durston; and to Barbara those miles seemed endless. But without a falter he did it and swept up the drive and into Mr. Middleton's stable yard. Then Barbara slipped off and threw her arms about his neck.

"You old dear!" she cried.

And Flight stood there quietly, without a trace of distress or a sign that he had done anything unusual. There was a step upon the gravel and Mr. Middleton appeared.

"Oh, Mr. Middleton," cried Barbara, "do you know what a horse this is? And do you know what he has just done for me? And do—there is something—you must—"

"Why, Barbara," said Mr. Middleton, "has anything happened? What is the matter? I thought Flight seemed to be a pretty good horse. That is why I bought him. Now tell me—I don't quite understand what you are driving at."

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Barbara laughed nervously. "Of course you don't." And then she told him her adventure, while Flight, finding that he was no longer wanted, wandered into the barn and into his stall.

"We must get right down there," said Mr. Middleton, when Barbara had finished her story. "If you are mistaken, which I hope is the case, it is no matter and I can ask Mrs. Lee to come back with us. And if you are right—"

Barbara looked up and there, behind Mr. Middleton, stood Mr. Roe. He was always appearing at the important moment. Unconsciously, as it seemed, he took charge at once.

"We should have your motor car, Mr. Middleton," he said, "and I will get it out while you telephone to Mr. Young. He should have no trouble in borrowing another car if one can not be hired in town. Mr. Creamer has a car, I believe, and I should like it especially if Mr. Creamer would go with us. Mr. Romaine may have returned early to-day. I will get Ted, and Miss Barbara and Van and he will go with me in your car. Will you wait for the others? Then you and Mr. Romaine and Mr. Young

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will follow as soon as possible. I will start at once, I think."

Mr. Middleton nodded and started for the house. Roe had moved toward the car shed as he was speaking, and in a few minutes the car was ready. Van ran out and, as he jumped into his place, they started.

Roe was a reckless driver. The car turned into King street on two wheels and into the Romaine drive in the same way. And, for the second time that day, Ted jumped off the roof of the porch. His father was expected in a few minutes and they left a message for him. Then they were off.

Neither Ted nor Barbara will ever forget that run. Mr. Middleton's car was powerful and Roe got the best there was in it. There was a confused blur of a smooth white road, houses flying past, gray smooches that meant stone walls, a great blaring of the horn, and they were mounting High Bridge; and, from the summit of the arch, the car seemed to reach the shore road in a single leap. And, down that road, the swift motion brought the strong east wind almost in their faces and Ted's eyes were so full of tears that he saw nothing but the back of the seat in front of him. Another turn, almost

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throwing them out of their seats, and they stopped before the cottage.

There was nobody there. It was locked fast. Waiting only long enough to make sure of that, Roe drove over the springy turf toward Cap'n Billy's. It was impossible to run fast here, but Barbara was surprised when Roe stopped on the top of a little hillock and stood up on his seat.

"Oh, what is the matter, Mr. Roe?" she asked anxiously. "Have we broken down? Do let's hurry. I hope she is at Cap'n Billy's."

"Look," said Roe.

From the point where the car stood they had an unobstructed view of the bay. Barbara, looking where he pointed, saw a sloop, a mile or so off shore, heading out. She was making rather heavy weather of it; and, if the wind increased as it promised, she would do worse.

Barbara was unwilling to believe. "What boat is it?" she asked. She knew very well. "It can't be—do you mean—"

Roe's eyes were eager with purpose, but he spoke quietly. "She is in that boat," he said. "I think we know the boat."

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"How do you know she is? Are you sure?"

"I am sure. And Beverly is not with her. There are only the two men, I think."

"What can we do, Mr. Roe?" Ted asked, in a subdued voice. "We could never catch her in Cap'n Billy's boat, and by the time we can start out of Durston in a tug, we shall have lost them."

"Quite right, Ted," Mr. Roe answered. "But I have a plan and I hope you will all join me. You will see very soon." He sat down and started the car. "I believe I am remembering something," he muttered, as the car bounded over the sod.

On the way out to the road they passed the other car coming in. It was Mr. Creamer's car, but Mr. Creamer was not in it. Roe did not slacken speed.

"Gone!" he called as they passed. "Go on to Cap'n Billy's."

Mr. Middleton nodded and they sped on. It was worse, going back, than it had been coming down, for the wind was more directly in their faces and it was strengthening every minute. They could only crouch into the shelter of the seat ahead and get what protection that gave. And Barbara wondered

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and wondered. What did it all mean? What did Mr. Roe know and how was he so sure? And why should poor Mrs. Lee be so persecuted? For answers to those questions they must wait. Perhaps they would be answered some time. What Mr. Roe meant to do they would learn very soon.

They whirled into the Middleton drive and stopped with a jerk before the car shed. Roe leaped out.

“Come” he said. “No time to lose.”

He was leading the way, almost on the run, to the airship shed, and the others followed instinctively. Roe opened the great doors in feverish haste and uttered an exclamation of disappointment. The balloon was only half filled and a touch at the valve of the tank in the car showed that it was empty.

“Too bad! Too bad!” Roe muttered to himself. “Precious time lost!”

He ran to the power house and in fifteen minutes the others heard the sound of the hydrogen pump; but it was faint. Evidently, the supply was short. They could not wait to fill the tank.

Roe came back and watched the balloon expanding slowly. Then he shut the tank valve and waited some minutes longer, with

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growing impatience. The sound of the pump was fainter.

"It'll have to do," he said at last. "Not gas enough to compress. I hate to start without a full tank, but that would take half the afternoon." He turned to the others. "Will you go?" he asked.

Ted spoke first. "Of course," he said. "But it's ugly looking weather, Mr. Roe. It will be worse before it's better. But I'll go. We can't help the weather."

Barbara spoke impatiently. "Yes—yes," she said. "Hurry!"

Van murmured something. He stammered a little, but nobody attended to him or noticed how pale he was. Mr. Roe and Ted pulled the "Dragon-Fly" almost out of the shed and they all got in. They had lost a precious half hour. As they rose they heard the beat of a motor car and looked down. Mr. Middleton was driving in at a great speed—but Roe would have driven faster. In the car with the three men were Beverly and Martha. Barbara leaned over and waved her hand. Then the wind seized the airship and bore it rapidly off to the westward.



## CHAPTER XIV.

It was a wild wind that had them in its grasp, but they felt its weight only for an instant. Then, although the air felt cool, with the fresh dampness that the east wind always brings, there was scarcely a breath upon their faces. The engines were but just turning over and they had been lifted by the balloon, which Roe had filled too full for the load. The stillness startled Ted and he looked over the side. They were still rising fast and the country was hurrying under them at a great speed. Then, as he looked, the hurrying landscape lagged a little. There could be no doubt about it, they were going less rapidly. Ted could not believe that the wind was going down, for he had had enough experience of weather to know that that was not the way of the east wind at such times. Roe was working at the engines and a faint breeze sprang up ahead. The harbor was far to the east now and they would do no better than to pass over the mouth of Little River.

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Ted gave the wheel a turn and Roe looked up. He saw the astonishment in Ted's face.

"That's right, Ted," he said. "Head out and against the wind. This won't do or we shall drift so far to leeward that we can't get back. I have come up about as far as I dare. The set from the east is not so strong up here, but we can't stay here a great while. This is going to be the cloud level before long. And the depth of this east wind is increasing all the time. We shall need all the power we have. If I can only get the engines to work at their best—"

He bent over the engines again and their beat became more rapid.

"It seems to me, Mr. Roe," Ted said, after a short silence, "that this promises to be a hard blow. We ought to get through what we have to do as soon as we can or it may be too much for us."

"You're quite right, Ted," Roe answered, still working over the engines, "I agree with you entirely. The plain truth is that the hurricane season is with us and I think we have struck into the middle of a bad one. Personally, I have confidence in the airship. But I have no right to take any of you with me. I can land you down below there, some-

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where, and you can get home somehow, or find shelter. I can manage the airship alone, and—”

Barbara spoke up, rather sharply. “What nonsense, Mr. Roe! Do you think we are going to back out? I’m not and I don’t believe Ted is and—”

“I’ll stay,” said Ted, quietly.

Van did not speak at once. “D—do you th-think,” he asked at last, stammering a little, “th-that it’s dan-dangerous?”

“Certainly is,” Roe replied, very short. “No doubt about it. Shall we put you down?”

Van braced up nobly. “’Course not,” he said, briskly. “Can’t leave me.”

There was a strong wind in their faces by this time, and the engines were working as if they meant business. Ted glanced over the side again. They were headed almost directly into the wind and it seemed to him, as he looked, that their progress was very slow and crab-like. They held their own against the wind, but they were merely crawling, sidewise, down the shore.

“We’ll never catch anything at this rate,” he remarked.

“We’ll do better presently,” said Roe.

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“Hope so,” Ted returned, “for we’ll have to get down lower pretty soon.”

The clouds had thickened overhead and seemed almost close enough to envelop the balloon at any moment. Wisps and bunches of scud were driving over them now from the east and a fine mist was beginning to fall, with scattered drops of rain. The country spread out below them was so dark that it was difficult to distinguish anything. The water was a dull gray with tiny points and lines of white sprinkled upon it. They were more thinly scattered than they had been, but larger. Ted knew well enough that this meant the sea was rising fast. He knew something about that bay, and he could have foretold that the whitecaps would disappear for a time and later, when the wind had reached the height of its fury, the whole surface of the bay would be a sheet of flying spray. It was no weather for a small sloop to choose for starting out to sea—nor for an airship, for that matter.

There was no sign of that small sloop. Far down below them a tug was laboring homeward and, a mile farther out, a fisherman was making in under her “four lowers.” It was too much sail and it made her

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stagger; but what did a fisherman ever care for that? He would carry that sail until he passed in by Breakwater Island. He was ploughing along steadily now, at a great rate, and, even from that height, Ted could see the white water boiling over the lee rail. Far out upon the horizon was the dim outline of a deep-laden coaster making for some haven nearer than Durston. But that was all. Nothing that might be the sloop—nothing but that rolling, tumbling gray water.

“Well?” asked Roe, as Ted’s gaze came back to the car.

Ted shook his head.

“No matter,” said Roe, “I think I know where to look. I’m afraid we’ll have to work up to our full power and I’m not sure—”

He broke off there and made his way slowly to the fuel tanks. Moving about in the car was avoided as much as possible, for any shifting of the weight made an adjustment of the wings necessary. Roe examined the tanks and looked up, rather serious.

“Three hours of liquid air,” he announced, “and eight of gasoline. We must make the most of it and trust to luck. We must do our best now.”

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At his rapid touch upon the valves the engines almost doubled their beat. Everybody in the car had to crouch into the shelter of the sides, away from the wind and the driving rain. The sliding covers were pulled over the forward part of the boat, but Ted could not avail himself of that protection—he must see to steer—and Roe would not. With the increase in speed they took a more southerly course and their progress was less crab-like. Suddenly, everything was blotted out. They were in the cloud.

Roe was not disconcerted. "Time for us to leave," he said. "Let her go down a little, Van."

There was no reply from Van, who was under cover and almost out of sight. But the "Dragon-Fly" dipped at once, slid swiftly down for a couple of hundred feet, then righted. The wind was stronger down there and it was raining hard.

"Surprising difference," Roe remarked.

He had to speak rather loudly, for the rain made a great pattering on the deck of the boat—a dull, metallic sound that became almost a ringing; and the noise of the drops striking upon the balloon merged into a faint roar. The supporting wires were sing-

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ing shrill, harp-like notes, not well accorded. They always sang somewhat when the airship was moving at all fast, and Roe had threatened to tune them.

Ted's only reply to Mr. Roe's remark was a nod as he gave the wheel a small turn and back again. With the increased strength of the wind, they had to head up into it a little more and their actual progress was correspondingly slower. They were not out of the bay yet and Ted began to despair of catching the sloop unless she should have been disabled—and still afloat.

Barbara sat, watching in silence and occasionally looking through one of the telescopes. There was nothing to be seen through the telescope but the storm-tossed water or the shores partly concealed by the driving rain. So, most of the time, she watched Ted steering calmly, wholly occupied with his task and what was before him; continually searching, with his eyes, the stormy waters. Standing so, unconscious of himself, strong and unafraid, he seemed a commanding figure, but strange. Barbara had never realized that Ted was like that—or could be. She knew what worth was beneath his shyness and his moods, but

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this was not the boy she knew, not her Ted. Here, amid all this turmoil of wind and sea, he was at home, unmoved and self-reliant, the ship captain by right of inheritance. She was seized with a sudden longing to tell him what she felt. *She* was not afraid and why should she be surprised that he was not? But there was Van—she was sure he was shivering.

Roe was as unconscious and as unafraid, and Barbara wondered at him afresh; not because he had no fear—she had never seen fear in him—but the eagerness was gone. There was no personal note in his manner now. The elation he showed in this wild chase was no more than he might feel in taking the “Dragon-Fly” out in such a storm alone. And he was quite capable of doing that. The touch of memory had been only a touch, after all. And then she wondered anew at that strange man. Nothing he might do could surprise her.

The clouds had lowered and they had to go down again; and twice more before they had got well beyond the bay and over the open sea. And, each time, the wind was stronger and the rain heavier. At last, as they drove out over the sea, not more than



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three or four hundred feet above the water, the noise of the waves was a dull roar that seemed to fill the air and the rain had become almost a deluge. To them, the wind they felt was only that due to the motion of the airship. But Ted knew how it would feel and how it would sound to one on any unfortunate boat that chanced to be out in that wild sea. In imagination he heard it whistling and shrieking through the rigging of the sloop as she poised dizzily, for an instant, on a crest, to slide, the next moment, down the steep slope, faster and faster, until it seemed that she must go straight down through that dark water to the bottom; or as she struggled up the next wave, with the great green top towering above her. It was not a pleasant fancy.

“Pretty far out, Ted.” It was Roe who spoke.

“Yes,” said Ted. “Too far, I think. She would hardly be heading straight out to sea, and we ought to have sighted her by this time. Still, we have come slowly. She could have come faster than we have if— if—”

“If she stayed afloat,” Roe finished for

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him. "It doesn't follow. She could not carry all the sail she started with. I know that she is a good, seaworthy boat and not especially fast."

Ted looked astonished.

"Yes," Roe continued, answering his look. "I happen to know quite a little about her. I really should not say that I happen to know, because I made it my business to find out. I feel sure that she would lose all her spars before she would capsize. I am not anxious about that. But I do not believe she is out here. Certainly not in sight now?"

Ted shook his head. Barbara was just finishing a survey through one of the telescopes. She had seen nothing.

"She must have turned along the shore, one way or the other," Roe pursued. "She would hardly turn to windward."

"Couldn't," said Ted, briefly. "Anyway," he went on, "she couldn't have got out of sight if she had. It would be an awful slam up that shore. I wouldn't try it."

"Then," said Roe, "she must have run down the shore to the westward. Guess we'll take a turn down that way, Ted. It

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will be all we can manage to get back before dark, even if we have luck.”

For his part, Ted had no expectation of getting back before dark. They had not even sighted the boat they were after and had but the faintest idea where she was. And the farther they ran down the shore to leeward the harder it would be to get back again. The storm was growing rapidly in fury and if the wind increased much more it would be impossible to make any headway at all against it. Ted and Roe were both wet to the skin, but they did not seem to mind it. As for Van, crouching under the cover, he had probably lost hope of ever getting back. But he was keeping a brave front. As they turned, Roe looked at his watch. It was nearly four o'clock.

Slowly they labored back toward the shore, drifting a little, and another hour was gone.

“Now,” Ted shouted, “I’m going to turn down the wind. You’d better slow down the engines—almost stop them. We’ll go too fast if you don’t.”

With a nod of comprehension, Roe shut off the gasoline entirely and checked down the liquid air. There was just speed enough

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for steerage way. Then they turned. The airship flew down that shore line at a tremendous speed. In spite of himself, Ted found that he was smiling.

“Good forty miles an hour,” he said.

“Yes,” said Roe, quietly. It was strangely still now. Even the noise of the rain was but a gentle purr. “I’m afraid it’s nearer fifty. We’ll have to keep a sharp lookout. Be ready to make a quick turn. She may be in any little shelter along the shore. I know them all, I think. There are several within a few miles here.”

Was that why Roe had made his lonely trips in the airship—expecting this very thing? Barbara was looking at him in a puzzled way, but Ted had no time for wondering. Behind a veil of rain the shores were flying past like a panorama but vaguely seen. There was a little cove, scarcely more than a bite out of the sandy beach. It offered scarcely any shelter from wind or waves and was very shallow. Roe waved his hand at it and shook his head. It was gone almost before Ted had seen it clearly; but there was nothing there and the sea was breaking heavily all through it. Then they had flashed past and it was merged into

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the misty shore astern. And in a little more than a minute Roe waved again and they had passed another, a tiny bay half hidden behind a point, unsuspected until it was passed. But that, too, was empty, although its water was comparatively quiet. Then three or four miles of open, sandy beach, lashed and pounded by thundering surf. At the farther end the beach curved gently out to the foot of a low headland. What lay beyond the lighthouse that was perched upon the bluff it was impossible to see, for they were too low to see over it. But in five minutes more that beach was passed. Roe was watching and as they flew past the light Ted caught a glimpse of a wildly waving mast, wigwagging frantically. There she was! Once abreast of the point, it was easy enough to see the sloop, pitching and rolling at her anchor.

Roe cried out, on the instant, but Ted was already turning. Before they could start up the engines they had been swept down to leeward nearly a mile; and even then their progress was slow, not more than two miles an hour against that howling gale. Just a little more strength in the wind and the "Dragon-Fly" would be at its mercy.

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Somebody on the sloop had been watching. They were getting up the mainsail now—close-reefed, it seemed, but the sail rattled and volleyed and boomed from side to side as though it would be torn to shreds. Roe muttered something under his breath as he saw these preparations and noted the slow progress of the airship. He bent over the engines for a few minutes, doing anything he could think of to quicken them.

“Nothing that we can do to hurry them,” Roe shouted. The wind was howling again and the rain making a great noise upon the balloon and upon the deck of the boat.

Ted shook his head. The balloon was swaying badly, from side to side, and was driven back by the strong air resistance until it tilted slightly upward. Roe glanced a little anxiously at the forward supporting wires, which were singing a shrill note, while the after wires were slack. If anything should happen to those wires—but he put the thought aside and watched, rather grimly, the actions upon the sloop.

The mainsail was hoisted and the halliards fast by this time. One of the men ran aft and took the wheel, while the other laid hold upon the anchor warp. It was



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taut as a string. He tugged at it for a minute, then called to the man at the wheel. That man left the wheel swinging while he made the main sheet fast. The sail filled, partially, and the sloop hitched slowly ahead, the man forward taking in warp as fast as it would come. The sloop soon swung short, almost over the anchor, but the anchor would not budge. Roe seemed elated at that, but Ted shook his head.

"No use," he said. "See."

The main sheet was slacked a little and the man who had been tugging at the anchor dove below, coming up almost instantly with a hatchet. The warp was cut across the bitts at one blow. The sloop drifted astern, the sail filled, she bent to the gale, slowly gathered way and staggered out beyond the sheltering bluff. Mrs. Lee was not to be seen.


All those on the airship watched breathlessly as the sloop dove into the seas that were running past the point. They took her fairly abeam at first and it seemed that she must be swamped. Ted caught his breath once and Barbara sighed "Oh!" shudderingly as one great crest toppled over upon the deck, but the load of green water

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poured off in a solid sheet and the plucky little boat struggled up through it. Then the helm was put down a little and she took the seas upon the port bow, sending clouds of spray half way up her mast at every plunge. It was a good boat that could live through such weather and the two men on the sloop were taking a desperate chance. Still, it was a chance, for the "Dragon-Fly" was gaining only by inches and there was not much more than an hour of daylight left. Ted turned a trifle, to cut across the sloop's course.

It was a steady pound now into the gale for the airship, and into both wind and sea for the sloop. With every minute that passed the progress of the "Dragon-Fly" was slower, for the wind was still strengthening; but the sloop was in as bad a case. Harder and harder she pounded into the seas, each one checking her more than the last. More and more she heeled as she topped each crest. They were forced to ease her continually and her sail was shaking much of the time. Before she had made two miles it looked as if she might become unmanageable at any moment, or be forced to run before it. If it came to that, escape





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would be impossible. Her best chance lay in holding on, hoping that darkness would cover her before she was caught. And Ted thought, as he watched, that it was a pretty good chance after all. If she kept on as she was going, they could not catch her within the hour—perhaps not at all, for they were barely making any headway against the wind. If anything happened—

As this thought passed through his mind a towering wave caught the sloop and whirled her into the wind; the sail hung, shaking, amidships, then the combing top of the next wave broke under her bows and foamed up over her forward deck. She was whirled back like a top. The wind seized the sail and slammed it back with resistless force. With a crack that, it seemed to Ted, he could almost hear, the boom broke in the middle and instantly the gaff followed, breaking just back of the peak halliards. The sail hung like a rag, creased and bellying. She could no longer keep on the course that had been chosen, and an attempt to sail in the trough of that sea would be no less than suicide. She fell off, shipping barrels of water as the sea caught her broadside, until the wind was on her quarter. The end

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of the chase was now a question of minutes; but how it was to end was another matter.

Three or four miles out from the shore was an island. It was nothing but a ledge of rocks, long and narrow, with a thin covering of soil which supported a scanty forest of oaks and chestnuts, with a few stunted pines in the sheltered places. On this island lived nobody but the keeper of the half-wild turkeys with which it was stocked. It was an inhospitable place, the ledge extending under the water for a half mile beyond each end, cropping out here and there in single rocks or in small groups; a place for boats to keep away from. And at the easterly end, perhaps a hundred feet beyond the last out-cropping group, was an isolated rock, great and flattish, but with plenty of jagged points upon its upper surface. In calm weather, with a smooth sea, this rock never showed, but was covered with a little less than a fathom of water. But now, with every wave, the water opened, roaring sullenly, the great rock reared its rough head above, white specked with mammoth barnacles and fringed with waving brown weed. Only for an instant. Then the crest crashed down,



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sending on high a column of yellow foam, and where the rock had showed was a whirling mass of frothy water.

“It’s Dead Man’s Rock, Ted,” Roe shouted. “She’s trying to weather it. It’s her only chance. Make it if you can.”

It was her only chance, as Roe had said, and the result uncertain even if she succeeded. Still, it was a chance. With the driving rain and the thick, black cloud sheet, darkness was nearly upon them. If she weathered Dead Man’s Rock she might escape them. She was eased in every sea, to make as much to windward as she could. The sloop and the airship drove for the same point, neither making rapid progress. It was a nerve-racking half hour; but when the sloop was almost there her skipper overdid it. She was held, with shaking sail, a moment too long, and would not come back. For a few terrible minutes she hung there at the mercy of that merciless sea, driven steadily to leeward with the white water breaking over her deck, while the “Dragon-Fly” slowly bore up to her. Inch by inch they gained, the drifting of the sloop aiding them, until they were almost over her quarter. They could see the men clearly enough



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and could have heard them if they had spoken. They could almost reach the shaking sail with their hands. Roe was looking intently and Barbara was watching him.

Then the sloop swung a little and her sail began to fill. As the helmsman felt it he glanced up. Instantly Roe's expression changed to one of such eager ferocity that Barbara, watching, was frightened. He shouted at the men—a hoarse, terrible cry—the cry and the look of a wild beast. And the effect upon the man was as surprising. He saw Roe's face and seemed overcome with fear. His knees shook under him and he lost his hold upon the wheel. With a curse the other man pushed him aside and took his place. And at that moment a woman emerged from the cabin and turned her despairing face upward. They all saw her. It was Mrs. Lee. Barbara tried to cry out to her. But Roe had seen her.

“Anne!” he cried. “Anne!” At last he had remembered.


Her face was transfigured at that cry. She raised her arms and stretched them up.

“Jack!” she shrieked. “Oh, Jack!”

“I'm coming, Anne,” he cried. And before anyone could stop him—before they




**"With the loss of weight the balloon shot upwards"**



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*THE AIRSHIP DRAGON-FLY.*

realized what he would do—he had leaped from the car. With the loss of weight the balloon shot upward. But before the rain and the darkness and the distance had shut the sight from them they had seen.

At the first glimpse of that figure launching itself at them so recklessly, the man who had been so overcome by fear sprang to his feet. With a last cry of uncontrollable terror he threw himself over the side. They saw his head once, a dark spot on the side of a great wave, then it was gone. But on the other side of the sloop, close by her, was another head. With the superhuman strength which they had come to expect of him, Roe reached up, grasped the dripping rail and swung himself in upon the deck. Then, at one leap, he was upon the man at the wheel, had seized him by the throat and torn him from his hold. Then he cast him, headlong, into the cabin. And Richard Roe and Mrs. Lee were clasped in each other's arms.

So they last saw those two before the rain and the distance and the darkness had made the sloop an unseen speck upon the waters far below.



## CHAPTER XV.

Barbara was the first to break the silence. It was no more than a gasping sigh as she sank back into her shelter, but it brought Ted to himself.

“We may as well stop the engines,” he said. He hardly knew his own voice. It sounded hollow and distant, as though it were somebody else that had spoken. “We can’t tell where we’re going.”

“Compass,” said Van, trying to make his shaking voice sound brave.

“There’s the drift,” Ted answered. “We don’t know what that is, and the wind may be changing all the time, for all we know. We’d better save our fuel until we can see something.”

“Can’t save the liquid air,” said Van.

“But we can run the light with it,” Ted rejoined, “and the pump. May as well start the pump. I think we’re high enough. No use getting too high, floating ’round in the dark. We’d be getting into the reverse





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current and be taken out to sea. All we've got to look out for is not to get too low."

"What—what shall we do?" Van asked, faintly.

"Start the light—and watch out for the water—and wait for daylight," said Ted, quietly. "If the liquid air won't keep we can use what's left in bucking the wind—if we know which way it is blowing."


"There's nothing to go by, is there, Ted?" asked Barbara. They could not even see each other now.

"Nothing," answered Ted. "But I think the wind is shifting to the southward. It's only a guess. I can't tell."

"Oh, I hope so," sighed Barbara, "for then it won't be so long a storm. Can't we—can't we do something for—for them?"

"How can we?" Ted cried, gruffly. "What can we do? We couldn't reach them now, even if we had any idea where they are—and where we are. I wish you could get dry, Barbara. You must be soaked, looking out as you did."

"Only my jacket, Ted. I'm glad it happened to be at Van's and that I had the sense to grab it. I can take that off. But you must be wet through."



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Ted was too truthful to deny it—and Barbara would not have believed him if he had. “Oh, I’m not cold,” he said, nonchalantly. “Got that light yet, Van?”

“Yes, but I can’t see anything.”

Van was looking through a telescope. There was nothing for him to see but the cone of light upon the rain, which was now a thick, driving mist. They were almost within the cloud, but sinking as the pump returned some of the hydrogen to the tank and the balloon shrank slightly.

“It’s queer,” said Ted. “I should think this cloud would be very low—low enough for us to see something if we were below it at all. Sure you can’t see anything, Van?”

“’Course I’m sure,” Van replied, in an injured tone. “You can look yourself.”

Ted made no reply, but Barbara leaned over the other telescope.

“It’s hard to tell, Ted,” she said, after a few minutes, “but I think I do see just faintly—something moving. It may be the waves or it may be just my imagination.”

“Look hard,” said Ted, “and see if you can tell which way we are drifting. Is it straight ahead or backwards or sideways?”

Barbara strained her eyes at the telescope

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for a few minutes longer. "I think," she said, "it's sideways. But I'm not very sure."

Ted looked at the compass. "Then," he said, "the wind has shifted a little and it's nearly southeast."

"Oh," cried Barbara, "then it will clear up to-morrow, won't it? Southeasters only last about a day, don't they?"

"Clear up to-morrow noon," said Van, briskly. Evidently, he felt better.

In the excitement of this question, both Barbara and Van had looked up from the telescopes. Ted made some observation which neither of them heard. Then Barbara gave a little cry and looked through the telescope again.


"Quick!" she cried. "We're going down too fast. Stop the pump. Oh, I'll turn it."

She turned the tank valve and the pump chucked queerly.

"I heard it, Ted. Don't you hear it now? Oh, stop the pump, Van."

"Hear what?" asked Ted, startled. "Yes, I do now. Stop it, Van."

It was the wash of the waves that they heard, nearer and clearer. They were settling fast. Van stopped the pump, but his nervousness made him longer at it than



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he should have been. Instantly Barbara opened the valve again and the gas rushed back into the balloon. They could hear the swish of the silk as the balloon opened. Still the noise of the waves was nearer. The impetus of their fall had not been overcome and Barbara was watching anxiously with her hand still on the valve. The noise of the waves was growing to a roar.

At last she gave a sigh of relief and shut the valve again. "We're stopping now," she said, "and we will begin to go up."

As she spoke there was a clear gleam of white below them and the sound of a heavy slap on the bottom of the car. A dash of salt spray came over the rail.


"Great benches!" said Ted. "That was too close. It gave us a start up, though."

"We must be more careful," said Barbara, solemnly. "Suppose—"

"Don't suppose," answered Ted. "I wish there was some way of knowing just how high we are."

"Barometer," said Van, briefly.

Ted laughed aloud. "Of course, Van," he cried. "You're a genius. What a fool I was not to think of the barometer! It'll be changing all the time, but we can tell some-



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thing by it, I guess. Turn the light on it, will you?"

The bright light flooded the interior of the boat and Ted set the barometer. "It'll be guessing, even now," he said, "for we shall probably be getting nearer to the center of the storm and we don't know how fast the barometer would be changing if we stayed still. But it will help. We shan't get too low, anyway—that is, if—"

He hesitated and Barbara looked anxious again. "If what, Ted?"

"Why, nothing much, Barbara." Ted hesitated again. "Probably it's all right, but it seemed to me that the balloon didn't fill as fast as it ought to have, when you opened the tank valve. If the hydrogen should give out—"

"But how can it, Ted? We don't let any of it out. I know the tank wasn't full when we started, but I don't see how we can lose any of that we had."

"Not unless it leaks," Ted replied. "I hope it won't. Anyway, we needn't get worried about that yet. I should think the balloon ought to stand a wetting."

Barbara was thoughtful for some minutes. "I don't see," she said at last, "why we

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can't do as we did in the thunder storm and get up above the clouds. Then the balloon wouldn't get wet."

"Well," said Ted, slowly, "I may as well tell you what I think. In the first place, I don't know how high we should have to go to get above the cloud, but it might be pretty high. And it is cold up there and the air is thin, and I don't believe we've got hydrogen enough to keep us up there. Then the balloon might be wet through in some spot. Down here the gas would leak through a wet spot, but it would go slowly. If it should freeze, the silk would crack—and we'd be five or six miles up—"

"Oh," cried Barbara, "don't Ted." Van groaned.

"I think," Ted resumed, "that we should come down gently, with the wings out, but I don't care much about trying it. I believe we are safer down here, rather near the water. You know this car is a good boat and it can be closed up tight. I wouldn't be afraid to take my chances in it, even in this weather."

Barbara laughed. "We'll stay down, thank you. I won't make any more suggestions." She sobered suddenly. "I wish



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we could do something to help them, Ted.”

“So do I, Barbara,” Ted answered, as soberly. “But Roe can do almost anything. Maybe he can pull that sloop through.”

“I hope so,” she said. “But I suppose we ought to call him Lee now.”

“Call him Lee!” cried Ted. He was mystified. “What do you mean?”

“Why, Ted!” she answered, “isn’t it plain? Can he be anybody else?”

“I don’t know, Barbara,” Ted replied, with a short laugh. “I am no good at puzzles. I wish you would go to sleep for a while.”

“I don’t believe I could,” she said. “But perhaps Van can. And you might as well come in here where it is dry.”

It hardly seemed worth while for Ted to go where it was dry, for he was wet to the skin. But there was no steering to be done and he could see more in there, with the light and the telescopes, than he could from where he sat. So he took the barometer and went in and sat down where he could use a telescope and within reach of the tank valve. And the water ran out of his clothes and down the floor into the

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little standing room by the wheel, where it was lower.

It was very still in that cabin. Although there was a gale raging, there was no sound of it, for they were a part of it, careering along upon the wind at a tremendous pace; how fast they could not know, nor where. Van wrapped himself in a rug and tried to sleep. Now and then he was roused to turn the light downward while Ted looked for the water. For Ted was not willing to trust the barometer wholly, in spite of the fact that it was falling rather rapidly. They might be approaching the storm center at a greater rate than the barometer indicated. And he listened for any sounds from the balloon, half expecting to hear the faint swishing of the silk as it slowly closed up. None of the three cared to say much. Barbara leaned back against the side, her eyes half closed, but she did not sleep. Occasionally she made some half-whispered remark about Roe and Mrs. Lee, and Ted answered her briefly or not at all. And when Ted was not looking down for the water they had the light turned into the car. It was more cheerful that way.


The night dragged on. Twice Ted heard



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the sound of the rain upon the deck over their heads and thought he could see the gleam of white water below them. And twice he turned the tank valve slightly and turned it back again and said nothing of it. And after the valve had been turned the sound of the rain faded softly away. When that had happened the second time Ted knew that the hydrogen tank was nearly empty. There must be a leak somewhere—a very little one, but yet a leak—and the balloon would respond to the touch of that valve just once more, possibly twice. He hoped it might be twice. When he looked again through the telescope, there was a faint grayness in the mist below them. The dawn was coming.

Ted was very glad, but he said nothing—made no sound. Van was asleep and he hoped that Barbara might be. So he only stayed there, looking through the telescope, watching the grayness brighten slowly, hoping that he could see something that would tell him where that wind was carrying them. It might have swung completely around the compass for all he knew. So he watched and watched and saw nothing but the brightening mist. And that seemed



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strange; for, although such a storm might change, in its last stages, into a hard, driving mist, coming in showers, with lulls between, they ought, in all reason, to be drifting rapidly toward the center and into harder rain all the time. Suddenly it dawned upon him and he sat up.

Barbara opened her eyes at once. "What is it, Ted?" she asked.

There was very little light inside the car, but she could see the puzzled look on his face.

"It's nothing serious, Barbara," he answered. "We're up in the cloud—that's all. I must have let more gas up than I meant to, that last time. There's no way of knowing where we are or which way we're going, or how fast."

"Why not pump some of the gas back into the tank, and go down again? That seems simple enough. And it's daylight, anyway."

"Yes," he said, "it's daylight, but not much of it, so we must be in the thick of the cloud. And we can't pump any gas back because the liquid air is all gone. I don't want to use up any more of the gasoline because we may want it later. We'll go down again in the course of time."

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"Why, Ted?" Barbara asked. "Is the balloon leaking? Is there any danger of its freezing, do you think?"

"There must be a little leak somewhere," he replied. "But it can't be anything of consequence," he added, reassuringly. "And there is no danger of freezing. It seems to me very warm up here. Don't you think so?"

Van was waking, throwing off the rug he had wrapped about himself. "Hot, isn't it?" he said, in his old brisk manner. "Dreamed I had had a chill and had been given a mustard bath."


They all laughed at that and felt better. "Why is it warm, Ted?" asked Barbara.

"Don't know," Ted answered. "The only reason I can think of is that we may be somewhere near the center of the storm—carried up—or helped, anyway, by the rising air. It's pretty warm near the center, but I should think it would be raining hard."

"It is," said Barbara. "Look out there."

They looked toward the stern and saw the water running down in little streams.

"But it doesn't make any noise," said Ted. "Why is that? Lots of queer things happen up here. Now, perhaps we shall be



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carried back before we sink out of this current. I suppose we must be going back, but it's only a guess."

"I wish," Barbara announced, "that we had something to eat and some water."

"Have," said Van. "I'll get it."

He fished around in a locker and brought out a small tin. Barbara and Ted eyed the tin hungrily as Van opened it.

"Six crackers," said Van. "No water, but there's plenty in the boat."

"Well," said Barbara, "It isn't very clean, but I don't care. I'd drink out of a mud puddle."

They ate their two crackers apiece with great relish, and Ted found that the aluminum pail had been left out in the rain. It was half full of water.

"You first, Barbara," he said, and she drank from the pail.

"Hold on," cried Van, "there's a cup in here."

"No matter," answered Barbara, as she put down the pail with a sigh. "I couldn't wait. It isn't ice water, but it's very good. I think I've had my share."

The two boys drank their portions of water, and although it was tasteless and

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almost warm, it seemed very good to them. Then Ted set the pail outside again. Van was looking at the barometer.

“Goodness!” he cried. “Look at this. What does it read?”

“Why, Ted,” said Barbara, “the needle points to the blank part, where there aren’t any figures. What do you suppose it means?”

“I give it up,” Ted answered. “It may have gone all the way around twice, for all I know. It doesn’t make much difference. If we are where I think we are, the pressure is very low. If we watch the barometer now and see that it changes, we shan’t know whether we are going up or down or whether we are just getting into another part of the storm, where the pressure is very different. So the only thing to do is to wait until we can see what is happening to us. I feel cheerful enough, except that I am awfully hungry.”

“Yes, Ted,” said Barbara, “and except that we don’t know what has become of—”

Ted interrupted her. “Yes,” he said, “I know. But let’s try not to worry about them. We can’t do a thing. And, at least,


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they could see where they were and try to get somewhere.”

“Would you really rather,” Barbara asked, “be down on the water in the sloop, in that awful sea, than up here? It’s so quiet here! You wouldn’t know there was any storm at all.”

Barbara was right. It was perfectly still. Ted considered for a moment. “I suppose,” he said then, “that it sounds foolish, but I should feel more at home on the water than I do up here. And I have been out in as bad weather as this. And there is something to do. You don’t feel so helpless.”

That point of view did not seem to appeal to Van. Nobody spoke for some time. Then Ted went out into the wet. Their light had gone out when the supply of liquid air ran out, but it was broad daylight—as light as it would be in that thick cloud. Ted was still wet through, but it was so warm that he did not mind it; and he felt freer out there. He leaned on the rail for a long time, looking out into the thickness that was all about them. At last it seemed to him that the cloud above was more solid—more like a cloud. He looked down, stared hard



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for a minute. Then he called in to the others.

“Where do you think we are? And how fast do you bet we are going?” His voice sounded strangely cheerful.

Barbara poked her head out. “Where, Ted? What do you see?”

“It’s almost gone out of sight now, Barbara. I could hardly see, anyway, because we’re not quite out of the cloud yet. But I’m sure it was Bleak Island. And we’re going pretty fast, but not so fast as we were. We’re dropping all the time.”

“The leak?” Barbara asked, rather fearfully.

“Yes,” Ted answered. “It’s getting worse, I think. But I don’t care. We’ll get down into the lower current pretty soon and be carried back toward the island. Then, if we can get near enough, I’ll let some gas out of the balloon and try to land.”

It was not so warm as it had been, but it was not that that made Barbara shiver as she spoke. “How will you do it, Ted?”

“Well,” he answered, “I can’t tell yet, exactly. It will depend so much on what happens. But think how fast we must have

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come to be 'way over here, miles beyond where we left the bay."

"I don't see," said Barbara, slowly, "how we were going east, at all, when we were so near the bottom of the clouds. I thought the clouds went toward the center of the storm."

"It must have been a break," said Ted. "I don't understand it very well. Look! Now we aren't moving at all—and now the cloud is thick below us again. I guess we must be starting back. I'm going to get ready to let the gas out if we have to."

Ted went in under the deck again and hunted for a stick of some kind; but there was no such thing in the car. He had not time for much hunting.

"Are you sure, Van?"

Van, who had been helping in the search, was very sure.

"Then," said Ted, "I'll have to use my knife unless you can find one. Mine isn't really heavy enough."

Van found a table knife. It was not sharp, and Ted would not take it.

"I'll use my own," he said, "and trust to luck. It's raining awfully hard now, anyway, and maybe the leak will get so bad





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I shan't have to. You stay right by the wings and be ready to move 'em when I call."

Ted went out as he spoke and found that they were now just below the cloud and only a few hundred feet above the water. Their course had reversed again and they were traveling westward—or northwest—at a great rate. It was raining furiously, but Barbara would not go back.

"No," she said, in answer to Ted's remonstrance, "not unless I'm in the way. Maybe I can help, and, anyway, I want to see."

"I think we can't be far from the center," Ted observed, "it's raining and blowing so hard. Can you see Bleak Island, Barbara? We ought to be able to see it by this time."

She had already been looking for the island. "No," she answered. "But it's hard to see much through this rain. Oh, now I do, Ted, off there. You were looking too far to the north."

Barbara pointed as she spoke, and Ted could just make out the dim shape of the island. If they kept on as they were going they would be carried by.

"I see it," he said. "I think it's time we went down. See, the rain is letting up.

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We'll see blue sky before long. Then we shan't have any time to spare."

"The center?" she asked.

Ted nodded. "Are you afraid to try it, Barbara?"

Barbara was indignant. "Teddy Romaine!" she cried. "What a question to ask me! Aren't you ashamed?"

"Well, Barbara," Ted began, apologetically, "You know any girl might—"

"Well, then, I'm not," she said. "I'll— Oh, what was that?"

There had been a moment's whirl of heavy rain, then a soft pop over their heads.

"It's the balloon, Ted," she cried. "Look at it. We're going down."

Ted looked up. The balloon was collapsing slowly.

"Good!" he cried. "Van! Look out for the wings! Let her slide down forward, slowly. Saved me some trouble," he muttered.

Van was attentive and they began to slide down; as slowly as he could make them, but pretty fast. Ted seized the wheel.

"Barbara," he said, "do you think you could fold up the fans? I ought to have done it, but I forgot. There are some han-

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dles here somewhere that do it. Maybe you remember. The fans will fold up tight against the boat and leave the screws for the water."

They were not very lucid directions, but Ted had no time for any better. The water was very near now, and the critical moment had almost arrived.

Barbara looked all about, but there were no handles to be seen. There was no time to waste, for they were almost in the water. The crest of a wave might reach the bottom of the boat at any instant.

"Oh, I can't find them," she cried. "I don't remember anything about them. I wish Mr. Roe had told us. There's a locker right by you, Ted. Maybe they're in there."

"M-m," said Ted.

He was watching very intently, for what he had to do must be done very quickly, before the water caught them. But he opened the locker with one hand and Barbara eagerly fell upon two handles that were disclosed. They moved very easily and the fan at the stern turned up straight, the last of the movement folding the vanes together like a butterfly's wings; and as the vanes closed the fan shaft was uncoupled from the

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main shaft. The second handle did the same for the fan at the bow, and the water propellers, one at each end, close to the body of the boat, were free for their work. Barbara had but just finished this, which took but a moment, when Ted called sharply to Van.

“Look out, now! I’m going to turn. Fold the wings tight as soon as we stop.”

As he spoke he put the wheel hard over and the airship swung around and shot into the wind. Van was ready and he folded the wings against the side of the boat at once; but as he did so there was an ominous crackling overhead. The balloon swayed, shrank and collapsed, the soaked silk splitting in a dozen places as the “Dragon-Fly” fell into the top of a great wave. Butting into that wind, after the night’s soaking and buffeting, was too much for it. Then the mess of ribs and stays and wires crashed down upon them, covering the deck, almost smothering Barbara and Ted, slipping off into the water alongside and trailing astern.

With a yell at Van, Ted sprang and grabbed for the silk.

“Start the engines—quick as you can—not too hard—we’ll be snarled in this stuff.”



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They were swinging around, broadside to the sea, and a big green crest came sloshing across the deck. One corner of it slopped over into the standing room, wetting Barbara from the waist down and leaving Ted standing ankle deep in water; but the most of it shot across and poured over the side in a roaring cataract. Barbara gasped and recovered and helped Ted with the balloon.

“Good boat!” said he, after muttering a word of thanks. “That was a tough one.”

Both were struggling with the silk, which was slowly forced down under the surface as the boat drifted upon it. They had taken the water nicely; but of what use was that if they were to snarl themselves up in the wreck of the balloon? Ted was skinning all his knuckles and rapidly losing his temper when the engine started. Another wave broke across the deck as he jumped for the wheel. The standing room was full of water then, and some of it crept in upon Van.

“Barbara!” Ted shouted. “Can you open the scuppers? They must be plugged. Sorry you’re so wet.”

“No matter!” cried Barbara, impatiently. “Where are they—oh, the corners—”

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She bent down, plunged her hand below the water and unscrewed the plugs. The water swirled and sucked and gurgled and boiled up again as the boat rolled in the sea; but it was going out, slowly. And the screws were doing their best to get tangled in the silk. The stern screw did, but it tore its way through with no more damage than a twist of silk rag about the shaft. Ted put the wheel hard over.

"Hold on tight, Barbara!" he cried. "May get another comber. I'm going to try to get to leeward of the balloon, so we can drift off. Can't get it out any other way."

In a moment they were before the sea and some of the balloon began to drift out astern. They could hear the screw tearing its way through. Then they were again in the trough and, at Ted's order, Van stopped the engine. One crest slopped up against the side, but did not come aboard. Then the balloon was appearing rapidly as the boat drifted off it. The floating silk broke the seas. But the crests were no longer white and it was strangely quiet. Ted left the wheel and tried again to pull in the wreck of the balloon. Barbara was already at work upon it.

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"Half a mind to tow it," said Ted, as he tugged. "It would make it smoother going for us."


He glanced out at the water as he spoke. "Great benches!" he cried. "Where's the wind? It's all gone. Just feel this gentle breeze."

The wind had died down with surprising suddenness and there was only a gentle air stirring. They were tossing in a cross sea, but the tops of the waves were smooth.

Barbara looked up. "It's breaking away," she said. She was breathing hard, but she spoke quietly. "Is the storm over, Ted, or is this the center?"

"Center, I guess," Ted answered, still pulling on the balloon. "We'll see in a minute. Probably this air will die away and we may get some blue sky. Then the wind'll whip in from the northwest and blow great guns. Got to hurry. We ought to be in Bleak Island harbor before this passes. May not be much over a quarter of an hour."

The balloon was coming in slowly and they piled it in a heap on the deck. It hardly seemed worth saving after all; just a mass of torn and broken silk and a tangle of wires. The supporting wires gave the



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most trouble. They twisted and kinked and by the time the remains of the balloon were piled on the deck both Barbara and Ted were so snarled in them that they could hardly move. But Ted could reach the wheel. He called to Van to start the engine again. In another minute they were racing through the rumbling seas for Bleak Island.

As Ted had predicted, the breeze died down to nothing; only a fitful breath now and then from any direction, as it happened. The clouds above became more and more broken and at last there was just a glimpse of blue sky; but it was only a glimpse. The clouds were rolling up again, thick and dark, but sharp, as though there was little rain to come from them. There was no time to spare, but the car was proving itself to be an excellent boat, buoyant and fast.

“Come out here, Van,” Ted called, “with something to cut these wires. And I hope,” he added, almost to himself, “that the blooming old balloon won’t blow away until they’re cut.”

After a minute of searching Van came out with a pair of pliers and a file. “Don’t believe these things ’ll cut it,” he said. “This



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steel wire's awful stuff to cut. Try it, though."

He nipped away with his pliers at the wires in which Ted was snarled, and Barbara worked with the file at the same time. Each wire had to be broken off, but they were soon free. Then Van began to cut the balloon loose from the boat, and in doing so he made a discovery. The second wire he tried broke short off at the point where it was fastened to the boat.

"My!" he exclaimed. "It's all rusted away. Look at it—almost gone. All I've got to do is to give 'em one twist and they're off."

"Well, then," cried Ted, impatiently, "hurry and do it. We haven't any time to wonder about it."

"Lucky," answered Van, "because the edge is all gone off the pliers. Wouldn't cut butter now."

Van crawled out upon the deck as he finished and made the round, breaking the wires as he went. Barbara broke those she could reach. The last one she held and examined carefully. Van was just crawling in to the standing room again.

"We ought to be thankful, Ted," said



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Barbara, in an awed voice. "These wires are all nearly rusted off, just where they were fastened to the boat. They might have broken at any minute—when we were miles high. I wonder why they were—and just at that point."

Ted shook his head. He did not know, and at that moment he did not particularly care. Bleak Island was still half a mile away and the wind might come roaring down upon them at any instant. But give him another five minutes—

"I'll ask Mr. Nash," said Van, "when we get back. He'll know."

"It makes me feel rather solemn," said Barbara. "I can't help thinking what might have happened."

"Things haven't got through happening yet," Ted observed. "Van better get in near the engine. We're going to have the wind within a few minutes and I only hope we may get there before it hits us. It'll be a pretty close connection."

Van did not wait for more, but went in at once. And what he said next did not add to their cheerfulness, although he said it very cheerfully.

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"Gasoline's most gone," he announced.  
"Won't last more than half an hour."

"That ought to do," said Ted. "I hope we won't need it that long."

They were approaching the island rapidly and could see it clearly; the wiry brown grass on the bare slope, the low club house, a little stream trickling down through a fresh gully to the shore, the hard-beaten beach of coarse sand. Even the stakes of the fish pound stood out plainly, for the harbor had been sheltered from the night's wind and the water was comparatively quiet. But if it came on to blow hard from the northwest there was but one little spot that would offer any shelter at all. And that was on the opposite side from the landing. The collection of small stakes supporting a light platform could hardly be dignified by the name of wharf.

A sudden thought struck Ted. "I'm a fool," he said. "Van," he called, "have we got an anchor?"

"'Course not," was the encouraging reply. "Too heavy. Can't carry anchors around. There's a little bit of a grapnel here, but it wouldn't hold us two minutes."

"Any spare line?"

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“Spare line!” cried Van. “Any kind of line’s spare line. There’s a short piece of rope in forward—thirty feet or so. Have to do.”

Van came out with the line and without waiting for any suggestion from Ted crawled forward carefully. He passed the rope through an eye on the stem and made it fast to the only cleat. The only fault Ted had to find with the boat was that everything was too light for service on the water. Van crawled back and returned to the engine, leaving the end of rope within reach of Ted’s hand.

They were just entering the inhospitable harbor and Ted was congratulating himself as he steered for the landing. But Barbara glanced out toward the northwest. She had looked that way many times within the last few minutes.

“Ted,” she said, quietly, “I think the wind’s coming.”

Ted did not have to look around. A gust struck them and passed. Then another came, holding on longer. They were almost ready to turn for the landing and Ted hoped to make it in the lull that would follow. But the lull was just too short. As they



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turned the wind swept down upon them, heeling the boat, which took it broadside, and carrying away the wreck of the balloon in a crumpled heap. Barbara watched it sail over the water and drop into the wash on the beach.

“Good riddance!” muttered Ted. “Look out now!” he cried. “Keep her going, Van.”

They bumped past the wharf and as the stern of the boat reached it Ted made the line fast to one of the stakes. Barbara got up, thinking they were to land at once. But the chance had passed.

“Can’t do it yet, Barbara,” said Ted. “It’s too much of a jump. Can’t make it again for a while.”

There was six feet of water already between the wharf and the side of the boat. Ted called to Van to stop the engine and let her swing back. Then they started the engine again and rode it out there, at the end of the line, the engine running at full speed. And in the gale that was upon them they did not get a foot nearer to the wharf, even at that. It was a wild sea that came in upon them, almost every wave sweeping the deck from bow to stern. It took all Ted’s



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skill and nerve to keep them straight. But in twenty minutes it was letting up a little. Then the chucking of the engine stopped suddenly.

“Gasoline’s all gone,” Van called; and he came out and joined the other two. “Will she hold on, Ted?” he asked, as he saw the straining rope.

“Dunno,” Ted answered. “Guess so, if the wharf stands up.”

The little wharf was waving wildly, but it held on. And, minute by minute, the wind lightened. In another half hour Ted thought they might try a landing. He crawled forward and Van followed; and, both pulling on the rope, they succeeded in gaining foot by foot until the boat’s nose bumped against the stake. Ted took a quick turn about the cleat, holding her short. Then he ran back, unfastened the deck shutters and opened them. They slid down into the sides. It was as easy as opening a desk.

“Come, Barbara,” he cried. “We can leave these open now.”

Barbara made her way forward and, with help from the two boys, she scrambled to the top of the wharf. Van went next, with the slack of the line. Then Ted cast off his

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turn, Van and Barbara held hard for an instant—just long enough for Ted to get a hold with his hands—and they were all up. They eased the boat back to the end of the line.

“She’ll be all right now,” said Ted. “Come on.”

“My!” exclaimed Van. “I’m awful stiff. Hear me creak.”

“Never mind,” Barbara cried, gaily. “I’ll race you both to the club house.”

She was off as she spoke, the two boys close behind.



## CHAPTER XVI.

They tumbled in upon the piazza of the club house, panting. Van was a yard in the lead; then Barbara, her hair flying, holding her skirt with one hand. Her eyes shone and there was a fine color in her cheeks. Ted came last, hopelessly distanced.

“Never mind, Ted,” said Barbara. “It wasn’t quite fair. You’re all wet through and you must be a lot more tired than we are. But a habit isn’t just the thing for running. Doesn’t it feel good to get on land again?”

“I think,” said Ted, slowly, sinking down upon the boards and gazing out over the brown upland and the dark water beyond, “that land’s good enough for me—and water.”

“Water, Ted?” asked Barbara. “Haven’t you had enough of the water?”

Ted smiled up at her. “Guess I won’t give it up yet,” he answered. “We’ve got to do some miles of it to get home, you know.”





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But the first thing is for us all to get dry. Maybe there are some dry things in the house. We'll get in and see."

"How will you get in?" Barbara asked. "And suppose there aren't any things?"


"I haven't decided how I shall get in," Ted replied. "I'll tell you later. And if there aren't any things there, why—we'll have to take opposite sides of the island and run around to keep warm while our clothes dry."

"Wish I'd had time to put on my airship suit," said Van. "Then I wouldn't have got wet at all. I'm not wet through, anyway," he added, rather regretfully. "Guess my clothes will dry on me well enough."

"Isn't it romantic," said Barbara, "to be cast away on a desert island? And isn't it convenient that there is a house all ready for us? I do hope there is something to eat in it."

Ted waved his hand toward the harbor. "There's the fish pound," he said. "We shan't starve. But I'm no great shakes on romance. I hope there's some gasoline here, somewhere—and I guess there is."

They sat for some minutes in silence looking out at the water over which they



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had come. The wind was falling rapidly, but it was colder. The clouds were breaking and there was a hint of sunshine.

"I wish," said Barbara, wistfully, "I hope the others—I wish they would come sailing in there."

"Maybe they will," Ted returned. "Maybe they will. We won't give up hope yet. Roe can do most anything."

"And how happy poor Mrs. Lee would be!" said Barbara, softly.

Ted got up, barely repressing a groan as he found how sore and stiff his muscles were.

"I will now become a burglar," he announced. "I trust they did not lock their windows."

"Suppose we try the door first," Barbara suggested. "It is easiest, and it might happen, you know."

Ted turned to the door and tried it. It was fast.

"No use," he said. "It's locked and it's a particularly strong door. We would have a job to break it in. I'll just walk around and try the windows."

Barbara and Van waited for him. He was not long about his examination, for the

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house was but one story, and there were not many windows.

“All locked tight,” Ted announced. “At least, I guess so. The shutters are bolted on two of them. I can take out a pane of glass, but I don’t want to if I can help it.”

“I have an idea,” said Barbara. “There isn’t much chance, but we may as well try it. Who has any keys?”


Ted shook his head. He did not carry keys. Van pulled out a great bunch on the end of a chain.

“Oh, fine!” cried Barbara. She jumped up and ran to the door. “It’s a Yale. Got any, Van? A latch key might fit.”

“Two,” Van answered, as he approached the door. “This is the key to the airship shed. Fits both doors.”

It would not enter the lock. He tried the other. It slipped in easily and the door swung open as the key was turned. Barbara uttered a joyful cry. Then she turned to Van, who was struggling with the key, trying to get it out of the lock. It came at last, with a jerk.

“What key is it, Van?” asked Barbara, curiously.



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“Our latch key,” Van answered, slipping the bunch back into his pocket.


Barbara looked at him thoughtfully. “Then,” she said, “if your latch key fits the club house, Mr. Creamer and Mr. Stanchion have latch keys to your house, haven’t they?”

Van looked surprised. “Why—er—yes, I suppose so,” he said. “But what’s queer in that? Just happens, I s’pose.”

“Oh, yes,” said Barbara, “no doubt. But it struck me as queer. Never mind. Let’s go in and look about.”

Van made no reply. It was no more than a coincidence and did not strike him as of any importance. Ted had already gone inside and was looking about, and Barbara followed him. Van stayed outside. He preferred to stay in the sun and dry off.

Inside it was as dark as forty pockets. Ted stumbled over a chair and bumped against a table before he could get to a window to open the shutters. That showed a square room which seemed to be used as a living room, with two chambers opening off of it. Besides these there was a long passageway apparently leading to the kitchen, which must be in the little addition in the



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rear. Barbara made her way out there, groping.


“Ted,” she called, “I’m going to see if they haven’t left something out here to eat. It seems to me I’m hungry enough to eat anything.”

“I’m going to find some clothes first,” he said. “My teeth are beginning to chatter already.”

And with that he disappeared in one of the chambers. In a moment he reappeared with some clothes which he brought to the light to examine. They proved to be some which had been used for fishing and were covered with scales and dirt. He threw them aside with an exclamation of disgust. The other chamber yielded nothing.

“It’s no use, Barbara,” he cried, as he came back from hanging up the fishy suit, “there aren’t any here that’ll do. We’ll have to do as they do in stories, and each take a side of the island. You go over on the ocean side—there is less wind there and the sun is stronger—and I’ll take this side. Come back in about an hour and a half—we’ll yell when it’s time.”

Barbara’s reply sounded as if her head were inside a barrel. “Oh, Ted, I’ve found



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some crackers. Wait till I've got some," In a moment she came in with her hands full. "See," she said. "But I don't need to. I'm not wet through, as you are. I'm pretty wet, though. Don't you want some crackers?"

Ted took some, but they were as hard as stones. He made a wry face. "Hard tack, Barbara. But I guess I can do better than that. Wait until we get back."

She looked up at him. "What are you going to do? Dig for clams? Well, I'll wait."

Van took some of her crackers and she ran off with the rest. It was not long before Ted was running around on the shore in a state of nature. He and Van managed to rig up a clothes line with two poles and a piece of fish line, and he soon had his clothes fluttering in the breeze. He turned hand-springs and did everything he could think of to keep warm. In the midst of a race down the shore with Van he turned aside and stood gazing at the fish pound.

Ted had been seized with an idea. "I say, Van," he cried, "I think we can catch a fish—that is, if you don't mind taking off your shoes and stockings."

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"All right," said Van, ready for anything that promised some dinner. "How'll you do it?"

"Why," Ted replied, "I'll wade in, below there—I think it's shallow enough to wade—and you be at the upper end ready to catch 'em. Simple enough, isn't it?"

"Ye-es," Van hesitated. "But what makes you think I can catch 'em?"

"Well," said Ted, "you can try to, anyway."

Van was taking off his shoes and stockings by this time, and Ted started wading carefully out into the pound. The fish, of which there were several in the pound, appeared rather the worse for the storm, and not very lively. The pound had been white water all through the last part of the blow, and the shallow water was thoroughly stirred up. Ted could not see his feet. He waded on until he had reached the deepest part, where the water was up to his shoulders. The waves nearly took him off his feet.

By the vigorous use of his hands and feet and by walking back and forth across the pound he managed to scare three of the fish up into the shore end; but whether it was Van's white legs that frightened them away

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again or not, Ted never knew. They escaped, and the last one of them to go waited until the last minute, and then, in his frantic haste, dashed against Ted's legs. Ted made a grab at him and for an instant there was confusion. Ted felt his arms full of a struggling monster which he could not hold, and the next minute he was on his face in the water.

He emerged, coughing and sneezing, and when he had cleared the water from his mouth and the sand from his hair, he sat down on the shore to consider.

"I say, Van," he said, "there's more fight in them than you'd think."


Van may have been lacking in the sense of humor, but he saw the fun in that.

"Ha—ha!" he cried. "We might give an exhibition. 'Mighty struggle between Mr. Edward Romaine and a bass.' Didn't last long, though. Guess we'll have to think up some other way to catch 'em, Ted."

"No, we won't," Ted returned. "I'll think of something—I know." And with no word to Van he got up and ran down the beach.

The remains of the balloon were still lying where they had been cast by the wind and





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had been washed by the waves, high up on the shore. Ted ran to them and spread them out, examining them carefully. Finally he found a piece that was what he wanted and then he missed something. Having no clothes on he had no pockets.

"Hi, Van!" he called. "Let's have your knife."

Van ran up and passed it out.

"What you going to do, Ted? What's that for?"

For Ted was cutting a piece from the balloon.

"Wait and you'll see," was all the answer he could get. And so he waited and watched while Ted fastened a pole above and a pole below.

"There!" he said. "Now, p'raps they'll get by, and then again p'raps they won't."

"Oh!" said Van.

"Yes," said Ted, "now we'll try it again."

And he waded out again, carrying his piece of the balloon high. Then he repeated his performance of driving the fish. It was slow work, but at last he had two of the fish in the small part of the pound near the shore. He had told Van to stand back, for he did not want to frighten them. Then he

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unrolled the balloon and gently lowered it into the water. It almost blocked the way.

“Now, Van!”

And as Van cautiously advanced the fish darted away.

Ted never knew quite how he did it, but after a few minutes during which nothing was visible but foam and pieces of the balloon, he emerged, choking and gurgling, and carrying in his arms a curious bundle—a struggling object swathed in silk—which he cast high on the beach. Then he threw himself down, sputtering and coughing. It was some minutes before he could speak.

“There’s your bass,” he said, as soon as he had got rid of the excess of water. “I wish I could make him swallow as much water as I have. Must have taken in about a gallon.”

Van had been standing gazing at Ted open-mouthed. “Guess he’s just as sorry,” he said.

Ted laughed at that. “Yes,” he said, “guess he is.” Then he turned to look at the bundle. The bass had flapped out of the swathings and was flapping his way down the beach. “Hi! We’ll have to club him.”

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The clubbing properly accomplished, Ted proceeded to clean the bass while Van built a fire. It is no slight job to clean a fish that weighs over one hundred pounds, and when it was done the fire was blazing high over a mass of coals.

"Now, Van," said Ted, giving the fish a final washing, "see if you can find a board anywhere along the beach that is big enough for him. I'll dry off while you look."


Ted was pretty dry by the time Van came back with the board which he had found after a long hunt. It was not big enough for the whole of the bass, but it would just take half of him. Ted hailed him with a cry of satisfaction.

"Had a long hunt for it," said Van. "Nothing else on this side of the island."

"It's fine, Van," said Ted. "Now, if you'll see to this while I dress we'll have it done by the time we have to call Barbara. Wait! I'll put it on the plank."

As he spoke, Ted kneeled down and went to work spreading half the bass on the plank.

"I say, Van," he said, looking up from his task, "I wish we had some pepper and salt and butter. Do you suppose there's



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any in the club house? There isn't any butter there, of course, but you may find pepper and salt. Will you look?"

"All right," said Van, and started off. He had not gone far when Ted's voice stopped him.

"And bring some nails," he called.

Van soon came back loaded down with a box of salt and a can of pepper, and with his pocket full of nails.

"What you want these for?" he asked, emptying the nails upon the sand.

"To fasten the fish, of course. Else it will slip off the board."

"Oh, yes. I couldn't find any butter. Will this do?"

Ted thought it would, and leaving the bass to the tender mercies of Van, he went off to dress. But as chef he had responsibilities and his dressing was much interrupted.

"I say," called Van, who was struggling with the board and trying not to get burned, "this is a hot place."

"Well, then, get down behind the board. And say, Van, don't let all the juice run out. As soon as it begins to drip on one side, turn it over, so it will run back again. We want to have this prime."

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At last the bass was cooked. It was very inviting, all nicely browned on one side and thoroughly done—it had taken nearly an hour to cook—it sizzled and bubbled most temptingly as Ted shook on the final sprinkling of salt and pepper.

“Say, Ted,” said Van, “makes your mouth water, doesn’t it?”

“You bet,” said Ted. “Great benches, but I’m hungry! Now let’s call Barbara. It’s nearly two hours since she went. Both together! Now!”

With that they emitted a series of the most blood-curdling yells. And Barbara came running so quickly that Ted thought she must have been waiting just the other side of the ridge.

“Oh, Teddy,” she cried, as soon as she was near enough for them to hear, “I saw the smoke of your fire and I just hoped that you had found something good. Have you?”

Ted affected a great indifference. “Oh, well,” he said, “there’s just a little trifle here.”

Then Barbara caught sight of the smoking fish. “Goodness! I’m starving! I guess I could eat—do you think you’ve got enough, Ted?”

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Ted laughed. "About fifty pounds," he said.

"Well, come on," said Barbara. "Do we eat it with our fingers?"

That was a difficulty which had not occurred to Ted or Van. They had their knives.

"There must be some things in the club house," said Barbara, starting off. "Wait for me," she called, for she was already half way to the house.

She came back in a few minutes with knives and forks and plates, and they sat down to a meal which, in spite of the fact that it was of one course—one dish, indeed—was as fine as three hungry children had ever had put before them.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"Well," said Ted, as he stretched himself out lazily upon the sand when they had finished, "I suppose it's my turn to hunt for gasoline."

"Wait a minute, Ted," said Barbara, "till I wash these dishes. You boys had the work of catching the fish, and I think I ought to do that much."

This appealed to Ted and he watched Barbara while she quickly cleared away the remains of the dinner. She made no attempt to wash the dishes, but put them to soak in the salt water, trusting to sand and time to get them clean. Van had been gathering up the rest of the fish.

"Come, Ted," she said, "take your fish and come along. We've got to find that gasoline."

Ted arose reluctantly and shouldered the uncooked half of the bass and the little procession took its way slowly to the club house. Ted put down his burden and,

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leaving Van to put it in a cool place and cover it with grass, he and Barbara went inside to begin their search.

There was no place likely to serve for storage for such a dangerous substance, and they could do nothing but look everywhere. Ted began in the kitchen and Barbara in the living room, their intention being to work down until they met. Ted overhauled everything, pulling out barrels, tins of crackers, bags of flour. He even looked under the stove, as if gasoline would be concealed there. It was a fruitless search. Wherever it was, it was not in the kitchen, nor under it; for he had found a trap-door and gone down, full of hope, only to find a latticed enclosure full of empty barrels and boxes. So he went into one of the bedrooms.

There was not much to be done there. After pulling down the fishy suit that he had discarded some hours before, and moving the bed, he was forced to give it up, and went in search of Barbara.

"Barbara," he called, "where are you?"

"Oh, Ted! Come here, quick!" Her voice sounded as though her head were covered by something. He went quickly into



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the other bedroom, and there was Barbara with her feet sticking out from under the bed.

“Why, Barbara!” he cried. “What under the sun—you don’t expect to find gasoline in there, do you?”

“I don’t expect to find gasoline,” she answered, her voice filled with suppressed excitement, “but I hoped I should find something else, and I have.”

“Wait till I pull the bed out. Look out for your head, Barbara.”

“Oh, I didn’t think of that,” said Barbara. “I suppose I might have done that.”

Ted seized the bed and pushed manfully. It would not budge.

“Ho!” he cried. “So it’s fastened. Well, then, I guess there’s room for me.”

As he spoke he dove under from the other side. He saw an open trap into which Barbara’s arm was thrust as far as it would go. Below the trap there seemed to be nothing but the dirt on which the house was built.

“Oh, I can’t quite reach it, Ted,” she said. “I can just touch the edge of it. I guess you can, though. You try.”

“Reach what?” asked Ted.

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"You'll see," answered Barbara. "Try, quick. I'm so impatient."

Barbara withdrew her arm, and Ted's arm took its place. Reaching into the opening, his fingers found a small box which he lifted out gently and set upon the floor. There appeared, covering the box, a piece of yellow tarpaulin, which Barbara removed with fingers trembling with excitement. Below this were some pieces of newspaper. These were lifted off carefully.


"For you know," said Barbara, "that we may have to put them back again, so that no one can tell that we took them off."

Ted was puzzled to know what Barbara was driving at; but when the last of the papers was removed and disclosed a piece of lace, fine and beautiful, lying in the top of the box, his amazement found expression in his favorite exclamation.

"Great benches, Barbara!"

"Yes," she said, her face alive with expectation, "it's what I expected to find and what I wanted to find. I wish Mr. Roe were here," she sighed. "That first piece of lace must be worth several hundred dollars. Let's see what comes next."

They drew out one piece after another,



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Barbara exclaiming at the beauty and the value of each piece. At last they came to the bottom of the box. Ted picked up a little paper package.

"What's this, Barbara?"

"I don't know," said Barbara. "Let's open it."

Ted did so, and uncovered a number of little shining stones. Some were blue and some were green and some were red; but the most of them were transparent and colorless, except that they glowed and sparkled with little points of light which changed, as they looked, from red to green and from green to yellow, and to blue and back to red again.

"Unset gems!" cried Barbara. "Now we've got everything."


"Except gasoline," said Ted, smiling.

"Oh, gasoline— Yes, except gasoline."

They lay there a while in silence, Barbara absorbed in her discovery, Ted, it must be confessed, thinking about the gasoline they had not found.

"I suppose we'll have to tell Van," said Barbara.

"Why, Van knows," said Ted. Then, noticing her look of surprise, he remem-



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bered. "Oh, the lace—why, yes, I suppose so. I'll go and find him."

He went out, but Van was nowhere to be seen. He looked everywhere, even going over on the other side of the island. No Van, and he came back feeling rather anxious. Just then he heard a shout and Van appeared, emerging from the earth near the landing, as though he had been swallowed, and the earth were just disgorging him again. He waved his hand to Ted.

"Come over here, Van," Ted shouted.

"Here's your gasoline," Van returned, proudly.

"Never mind the gasoline," said Ted. "Barbara wants to see you."

Van came over, rather disappointed at the reception of his announcement. He had thought the gasoline the important matter. Ted put his hand on his shoulder.

"Fact is, Van," said he, "I am more interested in the gasoline, but Barbara is bound to tell you about some smuggling—"

"Smuggling!" cried Van, all interest. "Say, who is it?"

"It's somebody you know pretty well, Van," Ted returned. "But go in and Barbara will tell you all about it."



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Van needed no more urging. He went in, all excitement, to hear about the smuggling and to see the laces. Barbara told him the whole story, interrupted by exclamations from him.

Ted walked up and down impatiently while Barbara's tale was in progress and rejoiced when she came to the end of it.

"Now, Van, you mustn't let anyone know," she said, finally. "We don't want to let them suspect until we are ready to tell the whole thing. And we've got to be careful or they will get away."

"No, I won't," said Van. "But to think that Creamer and Stanchion have taken to smuggling! Gee!"

Barbara was putting the laces back in the box as Van spoke. She put the papers back carefully as they had been, and the tarpaulin over the whole.

"Now, Ted," she said, "you must put this back just as you found it."

So Ted wriggled in on his stomach and put the box back as it was, as nearly as he could remember. Then Barbara put the cover on the trap. Ted wondered when he saw it, for it fitted so well that it was hard to tell that it was not a part of the floor.



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Even the nail-holes appeared in the ends of the boards.

“How in the world did you know that this was a door?” he asked.

“Well,” said Barbara, “I didn’t know; but I thought there must be some such place here, and I tried until I found it. Now let’s get the gasoline—if Van knows where it is.”


Accordingly, they accompanied Van, who led the way proudly to a little door in the side of the hill, just beyond the landing. It was plain enough, and no attempt had been made at concealment. A cave had been dug and a roof made to hold up the sod. In this cave was the barrel of gasoline, and it proved to be nearly full.

“Well,” cried Ted, “we were fools. This is the most natural place in the world for it, and we ought to have known enough to look here first. Van beat us all hollow.”

“‘Course,” said Van, with an attempt at modesty. “Found it here ’s soon as you went in.”

Barbara smiled. She had not been looking for gasoline.

They carried some of it down to the boat in the can which was beside the barrel and made trip after trip until the tank was full.



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“Now,” said Ted, when he had come back from the last trip, “the boat’s all ready, but it’s too late to start now. I don’t see but we’ll have to spend the night here and start in the morning.”

“All right,” sighed Barbara. “And now I’m hungry. I think it’s time for supper.”

“Well,” said Ted, “will you have fish or—fish?”

Barbara laughed. “Anything,” she said. “I’m not tired of fish.”

“That’s lucky,” said Ted, starting back to the club house.

They made their supper on the remains of the planked bass, and found they had enough for breakfast besides the half which was not cooked. Barbara gazed a little ruefully at the mountain of fish.

“I don’t know,” she said, “but I think that I shall probably have had enough fish by the time we get through with this. Perhaps I can find something else. There are some crackers in the kitchen.”

They finished their supper just as the sun was going down, and were ready for bed at once, for they had had little sleep the night before.

In the morning Barbara’s first care was

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to see that everything was left just as they had found it, so that no evidence of their being there was apparent.

Ted went down to the beach and found that the night's tide had obliterated all traces of their fire. Satisfied of this, they went to the boat, picking up the remains of the balloon on the way. This they afterward dumped overboard.

"There!" said Ted. "I think now that everything is all right, and that it would take somebody smarter than Creamer and Stanchion to find out that we have been here."

They cast off from the landing and the boat poked her nose out of the harbor. The sea was like glass and glittered in the morning sun—a great contrast to the sea of the morning before. It did not seem as if storms could ever vex that calm surface. They had been running about an hour when Barbara saw something far off to the west.

"Ted," she said, "what's that?"

Ted looked for some minutes. "I wish we had one of the glasses from the boat," he said. "They don't do very much good where they are. Can't you get one out, Van?"





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“Oh, yes,” said Van, briskly. “Just have to put on the cap and unscrew it.”

With that he lay down upon his face and was busy for a few minutes. Then, turning, he handed the glass to Ted.

“Here you are,” he said.

One glance through the glass was enough for Ted.

“It is, Barbara. It’s the Fishing Club launch.”



## CHAPTER XVIII.

When Mr. Middleton drove in, in his motor-car, two days before, only to see his airship swept away by the wind, his first impulse was to cry out to stop it. But the cry died on his lips as he realized how futile it was, and those in the airship thought he was only waving a farewell. Not so Mr. Romaine.

“I say, Middleton,” he cried, “I say—they’re going off—they mustn’t go off. What will— Hello! Ahoy, there!” he called, putting all his power into his voice. “Stop! Come back!”

Mr. Middleton could not help smiling to think of their stopping or coming back. The hail could not have reached them, or, at the most, must have been mistaken for a cheery God-speed. It was doubtful if they could have got back if they had tried.

“No use, Romaine,” he said, “they can’t hear you—and I think Roe knows what he is about. At any rate, there is no one else

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who knows any better—and it is too late now.”

“Why, but they will be blown away,” protested Mr. Romaine. “I tell you we’re going to have a gale—a hurricane. It’s getting worse every minute—all the signs of it. What devil’s boat could ride this that we’re going to have? It’s murder—that’s what it is. And I can’t do a thing—can’t do a thing!”

Mr. Middleton sighed. He was as anxious as Mr. Romaine. “I guess not—I hope not. At all events, it’s too late now. We can only hope—hope, and try to find them when the weather moderates. See,” he said, pointing to the “Dragon-Fly,” which was already almost out of sight, and speaking with as much energy as Mr. Romaine, “can any tug—or any car—overtake—hope to overtake that, now?”

“You shouldn’t have given Roe so much liberty,” said Mr. Romaine, dully. “A crazy, crack-brained fellow, to have the power to put our children in peril of their lives! Crazy! Crazy, Middleton!”

Mr. Middleton sighed again. It was useless to argue with Romaine now. Mr. Young had said nothing, but he looked

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very solemn. Mr. Romaine came to himself.

"I beg your pardon, Middleton," he said. "You have a boy there, as well as myself—and Young— Well, what shall we do now?"

"The first thing is to get this little fellow fixed—and his nurse. That's easily done. Wait for me."

He leaped from the car and held out his arms for Beverly. "Are we goin' to stay here?" he asked, going hesitatingly into the waiting arms. "I want my mother to come. Will she come to-day?"

There was another, then, that Mr. Romaine had forgotten, as badly off as the rest of them. "Not to-day, Beverly," said Mr. Middleton, softly. "Perhaps to-morrow."

The little face puckered, but Beverly was brave. "I want her now—wight now."

And Mr. Middleton carried him into the house, followed by Martha, crying softly. A word to the servants and he was back in the car.

"I think, Middleton, I will get out here," said Mr. Romaine. "You can find me at any time, at home—I will be ready at a minute's notice."

"Well," said Mr. Middleton, "I am going

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to take Young down. He can engage a tug to be ready to start the moment the weather moderates, day or night. There is nothing to do now but wait."

Mr. Romaine could not have told how he spent the rest of the day and the night. He was at the Middletons' forty times, asking if the tug were ready to start; and it was blowing a gale—a great gale. As he crossed the field back of the houses for the fortieth time he just escaped an elm that crashed down behind him. The wind whipped at him, and the rain lashed his face; but he did not even know it. He paced to and fro in the house, waiting, and listened to the sound of weeping which came from his wife's room, and was glad. He went around to the side of the house in his restless walk and looked up at Ted's window. He saw the Grecian columns and the athletic figure sliding down them.

"Oh, Teddy, Teddy! To think that I could be so hard on you for such a fault!"

And the daylight came, and he wandered around to the stable to see Jessica. He would have liked to hide in the hay. Early as it was, Pat was there, puttering around and talking to himself. Timothy came out

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slowly, his tail between his legs, dutifully made his salutation and went back.

“Shure, th’ dog knaws—th’ dog knaws,” muttered Pat. “Ivery wan of th’ ahnimals ’ll knaw, niver fear.” His voice was raised gradually. “An’ is it crool unkind ye’d be, wid th’ gr-reat pinance f’r th’ little fault? Kape away frim th’ dogs an’ th’ harses, thin. Shure it was on’y yisterday marnin’ ye did be kapin’ him in frim his ride wid Miss Barb’ra f’r th’ bit iv a parasang.” Pat had got Jessica out and was rubbing her vigorously, unmindful of the fact that she had had no breakfast. But she had not forgotten it, and was doing her best to remind him of it. His head was bent and his face concealed. “An’ manny’s th’ time I’ve found him in th’ hay cryin’ his heart out f’r th’ unkindness of ye, an’ him that proud wild harses cuden’t have dragged it out iv him. An’ I’d have t’ make pretense that I didn’t be knawin’ he was cryin’.” Pat stood up straight now, his red whiskers bristling, the brush in his shaking hand. “Shure, it’s not fit ye are t’ be th’ father iv such a b’y—an’ I don’t care if it’s my lasht wurrud, I’ll be tellin’ ye th’ thruth f’r wanst. ’Twas shtable-b’y I was t’ yer father, an’ I niver

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thought 'twas that kind of father ye'd be—ye an'— But I won't say annythin' ag'inst his mother though I may think it. An' if th' b'y is livin'—an' niver a finer b'y have I seen, an' may th' Saints presarve him— an' if he is livin' do ye be a betther father t' him—an' that's sayin' nothin' iv his mother—an' love him as he desarves an' show it. An' now, Mither Romaine, sor, I knaw well I've said more than anny man likes t' hear, though 'tis f'r y'r own good I've said it, an' f'r that no one ilse wud say it. An' though I've wurrucked f'r ye, b'y an' man, f'r goin' on forty-five year, I give ye warnin' if ye will have it so."

And, with that, Pat fell to rubbing Jessica fiercely, the tears dropping unnoticed on the floor. Mr. Romaine said nothing for a few minutes. Then he put his hand on Pat's shoulder and spoke low.

"Thank you, Pat. If I—if I find him, there'll be nothing for you to complain of."

"God bless ye f'r thim wurruds, Mr. Romaine, sor," cried Pat, dropping his brush and seizing the hand that had lain on his shoulder, "God bless ye!"

He stood in the stable door, crying without shame, while Mr. Romaine went to the

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house. Then he turned to his work with a lighter heart.

"Shure, Jessica, I knew his heart was right," he said as he led her in to give her her breakfast. "Whist now, till I spake a wurrud in y'r ear. 'Tis th' mother, lass, that turned his heart hard. 'Tis a blessed thing if he comes back now."

Mr. Romaine tried to eat some breakfast, but could not. He got up wearily and went over to the Middletons' once more. The wind changed as he went and came in from the northwest.

"I think, Romaine," said Mr. Middleton, quietly, "that we will soon be able to start, now. We may as well get aboard."

It was a fierce sea they went into, but the wind was astern and they drove past Breakwater Island and down the bay. Mr. Middleton, Mr. Romaine and Mr. Young stood in the pilot house, behind the skipper, and scanned the horizon for signs of the airship, though they knew well it could not have got so near home. Not a boat was in sight—only the tumbling water breaking into white which was caught by the wind and blown away. As they passed out the mouth of the bay the wind seemed to have



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lost its fierceness. Mr. Romaine broke the silence.

“Which way shall we go, Middleton?” he said. “West, I suppose.”

Mr. Middleton nodded, and there was no sound in the pilot house but the rumble of the tiller ropes as the wheel was turned, the occasional noise that came up from the furnace-room as coal was put upon the fires, and the sound of the water; little dips and splashes, with the tug rising and seeming to be thrown ahead, as each wave caught up with her, followed by a sudden checking and the long bubbling roll of the wave, as it passed under. The throb of the engines seemed but a part of the silence. They passed along the shore looking in at each little shelter as they passed.

“There’s a schooner on Dead Man’s Ledge,” said the pilot, nodding towards it.

They all looked. They could just see the schooner, hard and fast, heeled over, her bows on Dead Man’s Rock, and her stern on the ledge. Her foremast was gone and the remains of her jibs trailed in the water. Her boats were all gone but one, and that hung in the davits with one side smashed in.

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"Shall I go alongside, sir?" asked the skipper. "This wind is flattening out fast, and there won't be enough to bother us any."

Mr. Middleton hesitated. It might mean delay of several hours to take off the crew and put them ashore, and the children yet to be found. But they were living men and—

"Yes," he said, "if there is water enough."

"Plenty of water right up to the rock," the skipper answered. "We're all right if we keep clear of the ledge."

They kept on and the schooner became clearer. They could see men moving about on her. Mr. Middleton felt his heart sink. He had relied upon their having been taken off by the Life Savers. The tug came up under the bows of the schooner and to leeward about a cable length away. The captain was there and hailed.

"Hello!" he cried. "I guess this schooner's made her last trip." He spoke sadly. "Are you a wrecker?"

"No," the skipper answered regretfully. "No. Do you want to be taken off?"

"Taken off!" the captain said. "What for?"

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“Didn’t know but you wanted to be,” said the skipper of the tug, ringing to go ahead.

“No,” replied the captain. “The gale’s over, and we’ll do very well till the wrecker gets here.”

The skipper did not consider any further reply necessary, and the tug passed around under the bows of the schooner and went her way.


All day they went searching the coves and bays and only when night fell did they give it up.

“It’s no use going any farther,” said Mr. Middleton. “We haven’t looked to the eastward yet.”

So the tug was turned about and they steamed to the eastward. They waited at the mouth of the bay for daylight, then went on. Three haggard men were looking over the bright water without speaking.

“Middleton,” said Mr. Young, “what’s that curious-looking thing?”

Mr. Middleton looked and so did Mr. Romaine. Then Mr. Middleton took the glass from its box by the window with shaking fingers.



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“I don’t dare hope,” said he, “but it looks like—” He tried to adjust the glass, but it was only after several attempts that he succeeded. Then he turned to the others. “It’s the car of the airship,” he said. “Full speed ahead—and thank God!”



## CHAPTER XIX.


Barbara was the one to tell. She gave them the story of their experience from the time of their being carried off by the wind up to their sighting the tug; and she made much of Ted's running of the airship. Ted blushed and stammered, but could say nothing; and his father put his arm about his shoulders. And she made much of his capture of the bass.

"And, if you're hungry," she said, "there's forty or fifty pounds of it in the car—boat—I don't know what to call it."

And she told of Roe's fate with genuine sorrow. But they couldn't give up hope yet, somehow. Roe had proved himself equal to any emergency so far.

"And I am sure he's Mrs. Lee's husband," she added. "It would be a great pity."

But she did not tell of the box and the laces and the gems—not then; and Ted was surprised. It was certainly important. And at last the greetings were all over and the story told. Things were settling down



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to their normal state, although Ted could hardly get used to the new relation with his father; but he was ready to accept it smilingly and happily. Then, as he looked up, he saw Barbara talking earnestly with her father. They had made the boat—the car of the airship—fast, astern, and were heading up for home.

“Middleton,” said Mr. Young, suddenly, “I think perhaps it will be better if we don’t go back yet. We might have breakfast while we are taking a slow turn to the eastward. Perhaps,” he added, with a smile, “we shall all be able to eat now.”

“Yes,” cried Barbara, “and don’t have fish.”

The men smiled in answer, for they had scarcely eaten for over twenty-four hours. But Mr. Middleton did not understand why they should not go right back.

“Why,” he asked, “should we spend more time fooling around out here? For my part I’ve had enough.”

“Well,” answered Mr. Young, “perhaps you will change your mind when you hear the rest of their story.”

So when they were seated Mr. Young spoke again by way of introduction.

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"You may not know," he said, "that we have been bothered for some time by smuggling. We have not been able to locate it, but it seemed possible that it came to Durs-ton. We got to the point of suspecting that it was lace, for one thing, and there might be other things which took up little room and were valuable. But we are not as good detectives as these young ones. But go on, Barbara."

So Barbara told them the whole thing from Roe's examination of the laces at Creamer's to the finding of the box at the Fishing Club.


"So, you see," she said, "it really was Mr. Roe, and all we did was to follow the lead he gave us. And," she concluded, "about two hours ago we passed the launch on its way to the island."

There was a silence after this for some minutes. It was broken at last by Mr. Middleton.

"Young," he asked, "do you happen to be a special officer?"

Young nodded. "Federal," he said. "And Bleak Island is in this state—although that doesn't matter in this case."

"You can make an arrest, can you?" con-



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tinued Mr. Middleton. "It's going to be very unpleasant arresting your fellow-citizens," he added.

"Yes," said Mr. Young, with a sigh, "but it's all in a day's work. Let's keep on down to the island."

It was two hours before they got to the island, for they did not hurry. Creamer and Stanchion were not to be seen.


"Middleton," asked Mr. Young, struck with a brilliant idea—there was the launch, and it could easily run away from the tug—"I suppose you know about motor-boats. Could you contrive to remove the sparking arrangements or some part of them so that it will be impossible to start the launch?"

Mr. Middleton smiled. "Guess so," he said.

He and Van stepped into the launch and soon returned, depositing upon the floor of the pilot-house certain insignificant, but important, pieces of the launch's mechanism.

"There!" said he, still smiling. "Now I guess they won't start until we're ready—and it'll keep 'em guessing what's the matter. They'll look a long time before they find out. And now shall we go up to the club house?"





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The ridge concealed the tug from the view of anyone on the fishing-stand, and consequently they were not surprised to see, as they came up to the club house, Mr. Stanchion and Mr. Creamer, busily engaged with a fish which they had apparently just caught. The door was open and Barbara did not wait for the owners, but led the way at once to the chamber. The floor was soon opened and the box drawn forth. Barbara triumphantly took off the tarpaulin. Some of the laces were gone, but she removed one after another until she came to the bottom of the box, expecting to find there the paper of gems. It was gone.


"Stanchion must have it in his pocket," said Mr. Young.

"Yes, no doubt," Mr. Middleton agreed. "Now let's see where our friends are."

They went out and saw the tug lying off the harbor and both the men they sought in the launch, trying desperately to induce it to start. They must have seen Van, who was, at that minute, strolling unconcernedly around by the side of the house.

"Never mind," said Mr. Middleton. "They'll come back."

After tinkering a while on the launch they



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gave it up, and Creamer started up to the club house. Barbara had been watching them intently, and there was a hint of a smile on her face as Creamer nodded to them gruffly.

“Make yourselves at home,” he said.

“Mr. Creamer,” began Mr. Young, “I have a most unpleasant duty to perform. You may know that I am a Federal officer. You are under arrest.”

“Under arrest!” said Creamer, starting. “If that’s a joke, it’s a very poor one.”

“It’s not a joke,” returned Mr. Young, “as you will see.”

“Well—what—” stammered Creamer, “what do you—what for?”

“Smuggling, Mr. Creamer. Is that your chamber?” asked Mr. Young. “Well, it doesn’t matter. No one else could use laces. I’m afraid I shall have to search you.”

Creamer growled and protested. Barbara whispered something to her father.

“Oh, very well, then,” he said, “we’ll let it go. Perhaps you would like to see what I am acting on, Mr. Creamer.”

He led the way into the chamber and indicated, with a wave of the hand, the hole in

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the floor and the box of laces. The bed had been ripped from its fastenings.

Mr. Creamer shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know anything about it," he said, briefly.

"Perhaps you can convince a court of that," Mr. Young answered. "You may have some difficulty in doing it, but you certainly have the right to try."


Creamer made no reply, and they started for the landing, Mr. Young taking the box of laces. Stanchion was tinkering away at the launch. He looked up as they approached.

"What's the matter, Creamer?" he asked, seeing that something was wrong. "What made you so long?"

"Mr. Young has an idea that I'm a smuggler," answered Creamer, with a laugh of embarrassment. "A very reasonable suspicion, under the circumstances, but it is unfounded, Mr. Young, unfounded, I assure you."

"I'm sure I hope so, Mr. Creamer," said Mr. Young. "But you must admit that appearances are against you."

"A smuggler!" cried Stanchion. "What do you mean?"



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“These were found in his chamber under the floor,” said Mr. Young, showing the box of laces. “And—”

“Well, Creamer,” said Stanchion, slowly, “you certainly are a cool one! To think of keeping those under the floor of your chamber—and fooling me into the belief that the fishing was— Well, well!” Stanchion shook his head sorrowfully.

Creamer puffed red with indignation. “Upon my word!” he blurted out at last. “Upon my word!” He could not say more.

“And,” continued Mr. Young, quietly, “there were, in the box, a number of unset gems.”

“Unset gems!” cried Stanchion, as if in amaze at such a thing, and Creamer grinned. “Oh, you must be mistaken. Unset gems! But you said were, I think, Mr. Young. Are they not there now?”

“They are not,” said Mr. Young, looking very hard at Stanchion.

Stanchion laughed. “And you expect me to believe that they were there. How do you know they were ever there, may I ask, Mr. Young?”

Creamer was not grinning now, and Mr. Young found himself rather irritated.



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“These children were cast away here in the airship yesterday, after being out in that terrible storm all night,” he answered. “They found the box and saw the gems.”

Stanchion laughed again and shook his head. “They were mistaken,” he said. “The night’s experience turned their heads. A fairy story!”

Van was indignant at this, but Barbara and Ted were only amused.

“Saw them all right,” said Van. “They were there—”

Mr. Middleton held up a warning hand.

“No doubt you thought you saw them,” said Stanchion, “but if they were there what has become of them?”

“Well,” said Mr. Young, wearily, “it doesn’t matter. You are under arrest, Stanchion.”

“For what?” asked Stanchion, coolly. “I demand that you search me—if you suspect me of taking them.”

They went through the formality of searching him, not expecting to find the gems. If he had them about him he would not be so anxious to be searched.

“It’s as I expected,” said Mr. Young, “and it doesn’t alter the state of affairs.”



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You are under arrest, Stanchion, on suspicion. You will have to prove it before court."

"Oh, no," retorted Stanchion. "You mean that you will have to prove it. Courts do not act on a presumption of guilt."

Mr. Young sighed and said nothing. They were all seated in the launch by this time and Barbara whispered to her father again. Then she spoke aloud.

"Let us go, daddy, will you? The tug won't start for some time, and towing the launch will make her slow. We can go ever so much faster than you can."

"Want to get home, do you? Well, go ahead."

They signalled the tug and as she came up Mr. Young asked Creamer to move to give room to get aboard. Ted and Van and Barbara stepped into the boat as the tug swung it into place, and Mr. Young opened the locker on which Creamer had been sitting. There were the laces. He held them up, smiling. Barbara smiled in answer; but Creamer did not smile, and Stanchion did not.

"Good-bye," they called; "we'll meet you there."

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And as Van started the engine they puffed merrily out of the harbor for the second time that day.

"How did you know the laces were there?" asked Ted, after they had got well under way.

Barbara laughed. "Well, I saw Mr. Creamer very busy there about something, and he was so careful to sit there and not budge, I thought there was something interesting there."

Ted said nothing, and was busied with his own thoughts, which were very happy ones. His father was changed—quite changed. He wondered if his mother was—and then he leaned back, happily, and gave himself up to enjoyment of the present. The little slap of the waves was a pleasant noise, and the sun shone bravely, and the wind was soft, and the clouds over the distant land were beautiful, and he was steering for home. The distant land came nearer, and they were almost ready to turn into the mouth of the bay.

"Ted," said Barbara, softly, "I'm very glad." For she saw the look on his face.

He turned and looked at her. "Thank

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you, Barbara," he said, and smiled. "I knew you would be."

They had made the turn into the bay and Ted glanced ahead. "Hello!" he said. "That's a queer rig. About half enough sail for her. No, it isn't, either—isn't her rig—she's been out in this blow and lost—Great benches, Barbara! Look through the glass and see if it's Roe."

Barbara needed no urging. She was already reaching for the glass, and looked eagerly at the crippled boat about a mile ahead of them. She handed the glass to Ted, her own eyes brilliant with unshed tears.

"You look, Ted," she said. "I can't see any more. But I think it is."

Ted looked a long time. "You're right," he said. "It's Roe."

And they headed for the boat, overhauling it rapidly.



## CHAPTER XX.


Roe was sitting with his back to them as they came up, and Mrs. Lee was the only other person in sight, looking very happy.

"Hello!" said Roe as the boat slowed up alongside, but without a trace of emotion. "So the 'Dragon-Fly' ceases to be an air-ship and has become a motor-boat."

"Well, that's a great way to greet long-lost friends!" said Barbara. "But never mind. We forgive you. Yes, the balloon burst so completely that it was only good to throw away. And we were cast away on a desert island—Bleak Island—and have just been rescued by our fond parents. We left them there, with Mr. Creamer and Mr. Stanchion, who are arrested for smuggling."

"And what do you think Barbara found?" cried Ted. "A box of laces and some precious stones, under Creamer's bed. What do you think of that, Mr. Roe?"

"My name is no longer Roe," returned he, "but—"



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“Lee,” Barbara cried; and he smiled and Mrs. Lee laughed happily. “Oh, I knew it, I knew it. How happy you must be, Mrs. Lee!”

“Yes,” she said, simply, “very happy.”

“Come into this boat,” said Ted, “and we’ll give you a tow. You’ll get there quicker.”

“Well,” answered Lee, rising, “we might as well. But first there’s a trifling matter to be attended to.”

He went below while Mrs. Lee took the wheel, and returned in a moment dragging a man, bound hand and foot. He cut the bonds and stood the man on his feet. It was the man whom he had cast below so violently. There was a wound on his head where he had struck something in his rapid progress, and his face was covered with dried blood. It gave him a horrible look.

“Now,” said Lee, “you have only to keep the boat steady with the wheel. Do you think you can do that?”

“Yes, sir,” returned the man, meekly.

Lee took in the remnant of sail and made fast a line to the bitts, passing the end to Ted. Then they got into the motor-boat. When they were seated and well under way

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Lee took up the question which Ted had asked some time before.

"The box of laces does not surprise me at all," he said; "in fact, I was waiting for a favorable chance to go there and look for that very thing. But I am very well satisfied that Barbara should have found it. The gems were gone, you say?"

"I don't think we said so," said Barbara, in some astonishment, "but they were, after Mr. Creamer and Mr. Stanchion had been there, and we couldn't find them anywhere."

"Well," remarked Mr. Lee, "perhaps I can show them to you. Oh, not now—not now," he added, for he saw that they were expecting it. "I am no such sleight-of-hand performer as that. You'll have to wait until we see the others. They caught a fish, I presume?"

"Well—they *had* one," said Ted. "I don't know where they got it."

Lee laughed. "A very necessary distinction, Ted. They had one, I should have said."

He was silent for some time. "I suppose you would like to hear my story now. I owe it to you. Well, where shall I begin?" He was silent again, thinking. "A long time



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ago there were two young men very attentive to the same girl." He looked at Mrs. Lee, who smiled at him. "One of them was handsome, of a good family, with some fortune. But he was rapidly going through that fortune, in the good—or bad—old-fashioned way, and had vices enough to ensure its disappearance. Probably it was the vices rather than the disappearance of the fortune, which undid him, for the girl perversely preferred the other; and although all sorts of pressure were brought to bear on her by her family, she persisted in marrying the other. Then the young man of some family, but with a much diminished fortune, continued to go from bad to worse. One day she met him, quite by accident on her part, and he improved the opportunity to renew his suit to her and—in short, to say various things which it is not necessary to repeat. He ended by threatening her husband. She was frightened, of course, and instead of telling the whole story to her husband, kept it to herself. He succeeded in seeing her several times after that, each time falling lower, until, on the last occasion, he attempted to abduct her. It was in broad daylight and in Central Park, and her

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cries brought help, which scared him away. She did tell her husband that."

Mrs. Lee shuddered and stretched a hand to her husband. He took it, and patting it softly, resumed his story.

"Of course it was Mrs. Lee, and I was the husband. Well, his fortune was completely gone by that time—so completely that he was forced to turn to anything for employment. All honest employment was denied him, for he had proved himself utterly untrustworthy. He disappeared, and I hoped he was gone forever. Then Beverly was born, and we were very happy. That lasted for a year. Then I was sent abroad. What I was there for does not matter, but my duties kept me on the docks of Liverpool and Southampton, more or less. One day I saw him again, but he saw me and disappeared. What his business was of course I did not know, but I knew it could not be anything honest.

"Well, I saw him once more, in Havre. By that time I had had word that smuggling on an extensive scale was being successfully carried on, and to follow any suspicious character. You see I was a sort of inspector—a detective. I followed him, and you

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know the rest. Probably I should have done well to keep concealed, but my natural feeling of triumph was too strong, and, besides, I could hardly escape detection. Well, he will never bother us again, and his smuggling is at an end. It was on his last trip that Mr. Creamer and Mr. Stanchion got the box of laces. A good many others will miss him, too. There are several cities where he had his customers."

There was a long silence when he finished. Barbara heaved a sigh of relief. "Then it was he who jumped overboard?" she asked.

Lee laughed. "Yes, it was he. Thinking me at the bottom of the Atlantic, he was terrified at the sight of my ghost looking at him from an airship in a hurricane. I am glad that it was not possible to rescue him, for I should have felt obliged to do so."

"And, Mr. Lee," continued Barbara, "was your loss of memory real? A good many times I doubted it."

"Yes," he answered, "it was genuine. Then, afterwards, it began to come back to me in pieces, and I sometimes concealed that fact and sometimes I did not. For instance, you remember how I avoided seeing Mr. Eastman? Well, Eastman is a cousin of

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mine. I did not recollect that, but I knew that for some reason I had better not see him. My tales of the docks were real flashes of memory, gone almost as soon as they had come. No, on the whole, it was genuine, and memory did not return until two days ago. Then at first there was only blind anger at the disappearance of my wife. That lasted only a little while, and left me. But when my wife called to me it all came back, and with it an overpowering rage. I am ashamed when I think of it."

"And you did not know your own son," said Barbara, thoughtfully.

"No," said he, "but there is some excuse for that. He was less than two years old when I saw him last. They went to Richmond to live after I went abroad. New York did not seem safe. But I shall know him now."

Ted's attention had been attracted for some time by the erratic steering of the sloop. He had looked back several times, but always the mast or something had prevented a view of the man. Now a yaw worse than usual brought the sloop almost broadside on, and made the steering of the motor-boat a difficult matter.




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“Can’t your man steer?” he asked in exasperation. He looked back. There was nobody visible aboard the sloop. “What’s become of him?” he gasped in astonishment.

“Why, is he gone?” asked Lee, surprised. “It isn’t possible that I have scared another man overboard.” He measured rapidly with his eye the stretch of water, which was ruffled by a gentle breeze. They had passed, some half hour before, within a mile of the shore. He pointed to what appeared to be a bundle of clothes floating on the water. “He’s almost ashore now,” he said. “Let the poor devil go. After all, he hasn’t done anything that deserves a worse punishment than a mile swim and the loss of his boat. See, he has made his clothes into a bundle and tied them on his shoulders.”

They watched the man reach the shore and drag himself up on it. Then, apparently exhausted, he slumped in a heap on the sand. He was still lying there when they passed in by Breakwater Island. Some one was watching on the Point. He shouted and waved to them, then started on a run for the town.





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“It’s Cap’n Billy,” said Ted. “He can’t run very fast.”

“And look,” said Barbara. “There’s the tug.”

There was the tug, half way across the bay, making her best speed for home.



## CHAPTER XXI.

Although Cap'n Billy could not run very fast, he made better time than they did, and Beverly and the weeping Martha appeared at the head of the wharf while Ted was making the sloop fast.

Mrs. Lee got out in a hurry. "Oh, my blessed baby!" she cried.

Beverly rushed into the open arms. "Oh, mother!" he cried. "I *wanted* you to come."


"Yes, 'dearie, and here I am." She turned to greet Martha. "And, now," she continued, "who do you suppose is here?"

Mr. Lee had come up onto the wharf as she spoke, and stood beside her, smiling. Beverly regarded him silently for a moment.

"That's the mans what make the bayoon go," said he.

Mr. Lee laughed. "True enough, Beverly," he remarked.

"Try to think who it is we would like the



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most to see, dearie," she said, bending to him. "But you can't remember. It is your dear daddy, come back to us."

Martha gave an inarticulate cry and fell to weeping again.

"Is it my dee daddy?" asked Beverly, slowly. He was mystified. Mr. Lee took him in his arms. "Is it my dee daddy," he repeated, slowly smiling. "Dee daddy, did you come back from heaven? What made you come back? Didn't you like it? But mother says it is nice there."

"Well," answered Mr. Lee, "perhaps it is, but I didn't like it, without my little boy and his mother. I thought I'd like to come back."

"Yes," said Beverly, nodding his head in acquiescence, "an' so you comed back to us. We're glad, aren't we, mother? An' now we'll go up to great, big, 'normous house."

Mrs. Lee was smiling happily, through tears, and Martha was frankly blubbing.

"You go up, and I'll come pretty soon. The tug'll be here in a minute."

Mrs. Lee started up to the house, but stopped to speak to Cap'n Billy.

"Glad to see ye, mum," he said, taking

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the hand she offered, in an embarrassed way. He could think of nothing else to say, so said it again. "Glad to see ye."

Barbara and Ted were just coming up when Mrs. Young and Pat appeared. Barbara disappeared in her mother's arms. Poor Van! There was nobody to see him. Pat was hatless and coatless.

"Bliss ye, Masther Ted, bliss ye!" cried he, wringing his hand, while the tears rolled unchecked down his face and dropped off his red beard. "And th' mother do be waitin' f'r ye. Will be afther goin' up to see her now?"

"I'll be up in a minute, Pat," said Ted. "The tug's just coming in, and father and I'll come up together."

"Well, thin, an' I must be goin'. F'r I left th' shtable door open an' Jessica half rubbed, an' shtandin' in th' middle o' th' floor—an' Tim tied. Shure, he mourns ye. He'll sit there all day, an' niver a shmile, but th' tears nigh droppin' frim his eyes. I must be goin'!"

And Pat sneaked up the wharf as if ashamed, muttering to himself. "Bliss th' b'y."

And the tug was at the wharf and tying

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up. Lee jumped aboard before they could put out a gangplank.

"Yes," he said in answer to the greetings which were showered upon him. "How do you do? Yes, I've turned up again, but Roe is dead. My name is Lee now—I'll tell you the whole story later. Been fishing?"


"In a manner, yes," said Mr. Middleton. "These gentlemen caught the bass, however." He indicated Creamer and Stanchion.

"A bass!" said Lee, showing some interest. "Is it a large one? I should like much to see a bass." He turned to Creamer, who stood near, amused at the recollection. Stanchion did not seem amused.

"A bass," resumed Lee, turning to Van and Ted and Barbara, who had come aboard with Cap'n Billy, "a bass is one of the largest fish that is caught with a rod. It must be a noble sight. They are about to show me one."

Cap'n Billy grinned. "Int'restin' sight, now, ain't it?" said he. "I've seed most every fish they is, and I should really like to see a bass."

Everybody was smiling but Stanchion. "Let them see it, Stanchion," said Mr. Creamer. "You'll excuse our not bringing



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it out to you, gentlemen, but it weighs, in the box, over a hundred pounds.”

The box containing the fish was in the cabin, and they all went down to see it. Stanchion growled and objected, but no attention was paid to him. Creamer seemed to take especial delight in it. The box was soon opened.

“Ah—!” cried Lee, as a bass of noble proportions was disclosed. “A most magnificent fish! Truly, a noble catch! I wonder now if I could lift it?”

“You never know till you try,” observed Creamer. Stanchion murmured some objection.

“Truly,” said Lee, “no more we do.” Stanchion’s objection was louder.

So, paying no attention to the objections of Mr. Stanchion, he essayed the fish. In spite of the great strength Ted knew him to possess, he seemed to have some difficulty in lifting it by the tail, and his left hand slipped around and into the mouth of the bass. This way he was successful, and he stood there, dandling it as if it were a baby, for some minutes, and apparently lost in admiration. Then he gently put it back. Stanchion breathed more freely.

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"I perceive," said Lee, still occupied with the fish, "I perceive that you—er—stuff your fish—er—as you catch them."

Creamer was grinning fiendishly with delight. He was getting even with Stanchion.

Lee slowly straightened up, and in the hand that had been in the mouth of the fish was a little package of oiled paper. Stanchion's expression was not pleasant to see.

Barbara gave a little squeal of delight. "Oh!" she said, under her breath. "Oh!"

"And in this package," said Lee, opening it, "is— What! A bass stuffed with diamonds—and sapphires—and emeralds—and rubies! Gentlemen! Gentlemen! What an expensive stuffing!"

A smile, which broadened, appeared on the faces of his listeners. Creamer laughed aloud. Stanchion grew red in the face and tried to say something.

"If the gentleman is through with his sleight-of-hand tricks," he stammered, "if he has quite finished—I don't know anything about them—and if he has done—"

"Oh, but my dear Mr. Stanchion," Lee interrupted, "I am not, you know. Mr.

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Stanchion would have us believe, I suppose, that the fish swallowed them, and, like the carp in the fairy story, came to the edge of the water crying to him, 'Avenant, Avenant, here are the jewels the princess lost. You saved my life, and I have found them for you.' And he, most unkindly, immediately caught the fish. What does he deserve for that ingratitude? What a return for faithfulness!" With that, he handed the package to Mr. Young.

They were all laughing by this time—all except Stanchion, who had been baited so. Creamer sat down and wiped his eyes. He could not forgive that desertion by his partner. Lee leaned over and washed his hands.

"I think, Mr. Middleton," he said, "that we will go up to the house now. You have no further use for us here."

So Mr. Lee and Mr. Romaine and Ted and Barbara and Van went off up the wharf. Cap'n Billy lingered. He had certain ulterior designs.

"Well," he muttered, chuckling to himself, "who ever see a bass stuffed? I seed most every manner o' fish but I never see that—stuffed with di'monds!"

That night there was a torchlight proces-



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sion, gotten up by thankful citizens. And Barbara and Ted and Van and Mr. Lee rode in the middle of it, in a barouche drawn by four dancing horses. They went all over town, bowing and smiling to the wives and children of the thankful citizens who were near enough to be distinguished, and it all became very tiresome before they got through. But at last the horses, no longer dancing, left them at Mr. Middleton's front door. Barbara and Ted went down the drive together in the dark, and through the deserted streets to a certain unpretentious house that snuggled in among the trees.

"Well," said Barbara, "and now it's all over. You go back to school next week, don't you, Ted? And what do you think Van told me to-night? Mr. Middleton's going to send him with you."

"Is he?" asked Ted. He did not seem overjoyed, although he was smiling to himself, in the dark. There was a minute of silence.

"I'm awfully glad," said Barbara, then; and Ted knew that she was not thinking of Van's going to school. "Now it's perfect."

"Yes, now it's perfect," Ted repeated; "for my mother is, too." He hesitated a



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little. "I—I might as well not have had a mother, Barbara."

"Well, it will be different, now," she said. "Good night, Teddy."

"Yes, it will be different, now," repeated Ted again. The happy smile still lingered. "Good night, Barbara."







